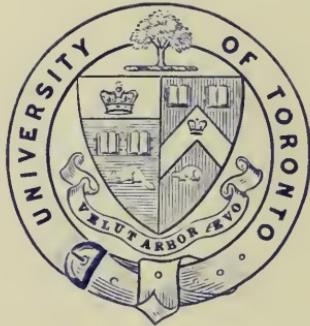




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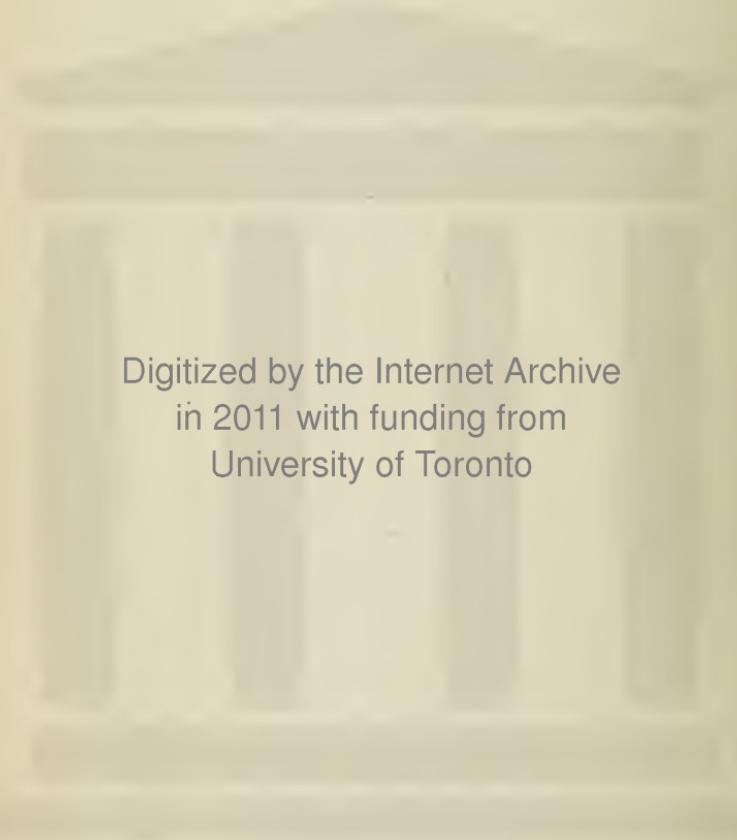


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NOVELS
OF
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

Library Edition

NOVELS OF LIFE AND MANNERS
VOL. VIII.



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ERNEST MALTRavers

OR

THE ELEUSINIA

BY

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

[8.]

Part the First

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VOL. I.

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PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

TO

THE GREAT GERMAN PEOPLE,

A RACE OF THINKERS AND OF CRITICS;

A FOREIGN BUT FAMILIAR AUDIENCE,

PROFOUND IN JUDGMENT, CANDID IN REPROOF,

GENEROUS IN APPRECIATION,

THIS WORK

Is Dedicated,

BY AN ENGLISH AUTHOR.

A WORD TO THE READER.

PREFIXED TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1837.

THOU must not, my old and partial friend, look into this work for that species of interest which is drawn from stirring adventures and a perpetual variety of incident. To a Novel of the present day are necessarily forbidden the animation, the excitement, the bustle, the pomp, and the stage-effect which History affords to Romance. Whatever merits, in thy gentle eyes, ‘Rienzi,’ or ‘The Last Days of Pompeii,’ may have possessed, this Tale, if it please thee at all, must owe that happy fortune to qualities widely different from those which won thy favour to pictures of the Past. Thou must sober down thine imagination, and prepare thyself for a story not dedicated to the narrative of extraordinary events—nor the elucidation of the characters of great men. Though there is scarcely a page in this work episodical to the main design, there may be much that may seem to thee wearisome and prolix, if thou wilt not lend thyself, in a kindly

spirit, and with a generous trust, to the guidance of the Author. In the hero of this tale thou wilt find neither a majestic demigod, nor a fascinating demon. He is a man with the weaknesses derived from humanity, with the strength that we inherit from the soul ; not often obstinate in error, more often irresolute in virtue ; sometimes too aspiring, sometimes too despondent : influenced by the circumstances to which he yet struggles to be superior, and changing in character with the changes of time and fate ; but never wantonly rejecting those great principles by which alone we can work out the Science of Life—a desire for the Good, a passion for the Honest, a yearning after the True. From such principles, Experience, that severe Mentor, teaches us at length the safe and practical philosophy which consists of Fortitude to bear, Serenity to enjoy, and Faith to look beyond !

It would have led, perhaps, to more striking incidents, and have furnished an interest more intense, if I had cast Maltravers, the Man of Genius, amidst those fierce but ennobling struggles with poverty and want to which genius is so often condemned. But wealth and lassitude have their temptations as well as penury and toil. And for the rest—I have taken much of my tale and many of my characters from real life, and would not unnecessarily seek other fountains when the Well of Truth was in my reach.

The Author has said his say ; he retreats once more into silence and into shade ; he leaves you alone with the creations he has called to life — the representa-

tives of his emotions and his thoughts—the interme-diators between the individual and the crowd :—Children, not of the clay, but of the spirit, may they be faithful to their origin!—so should they be monitors, not loud but deep, of the world into which they are cast, struggling against the obstacles that will beset them, for the heritage of their parent—the right to survive the grave!

LONDON, *August 12, 1837.*

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1840.

HOWEVER numerous the works of fiction with which, my dear Reader, I have trespassed on your attention, I have published but three, of any account, in which the plot has been cast amidst the events, and coloured by the manner, of our own times. The first of these, ‘*Pelham*,’ composed when I was little more than a boy, has the faults, and perhaps the merits, natural to a very early age—when the novelty itself of life quickens the observation—when we see distinctly, and represent vividly, what lies upon the surface of the world—and when, half sympathising with the follies we satirise, there is a gusto in our paintings which atones for their exaggeration. As we grow older, we observe less, we reflect more; and, like Frankenstein, we dissect in order to create.

The second novel of the present day,* which, after an interval of some years, I submitted to the world,

* For ‘*The Disowned*’ is cast in the time of our grandfathers, and ‘*The Pilgrims of the Rhine*’ has nothing to do with actual life, and is not, therefore, to be called a novel.

was one I now, for the first time, acknowledge, and which (revised and corrected) will be included in this series, viz. ‘Godolphin;’—a work devoted to a particular portion of society, and the development of a peculiar class of character. The third, which I now reprint, is ‘Ernest Maltravers,’* the most mature, and, on the whole, the most comprehensive, of all that I have hitherto written.

For the original idea, which, with humility, I will venture to call the philosophical design, of a moral education or apprenticeship, I have left it easy to be seen that I am indebted to Goethe’s ‘Wilhelm Meister.’ But, in ‘Wilhelm Meister,’ the apprenticeship is rather that of theoretical art. In the more homely plan that I set before myself, the apprenticeship is rather that of practical life. And, with this view, it has been especially my study to avoid all those attractions lawful in romance, or tales of pure humour or unbridled fancy—attractions that, in the language of reviewers, are styled under the head of “most striking descriptions,” “scenes of extraordinary power,” &c.; and are derived from violent contrasts and exaggerations pushed into caricature. It has been my aim to subdue and tone down the persons introduced, and the general agencies of the narrative, into the lights and shadows of life as it is. I do not mean by “life as it is,” the vulgar and the outward life alone, but life in its spiritual and mystic as well as its more visible and fleshly characteristics. The

* At the date of this preface ‘Night and Morning’ had not appeared.

idea of not only describing, but developing character under the ripening influences of time and circumstance, is not confined to the apprenticeship of Maltravers alone, but pervades the progress of Cesarini, Ferrers, and Alice Darvil.

The original conception of Alice is taken from real life—from a person I never saw but twice, and then she was no longer young—but whose history made on me a deep impression. Her early ignorance and home—her first love—the strange and affecting fidelity that she maintained, in spite of new ties—her final re-meeting, almost in middle age, with one lost and adored almost in childhood—all this, as shown in the novel, is but the imperfect transcript of the true adventures of a living woman.

In regard to Maltravers himself, I must own that I have but inadequately struggled against the great and obvious difficulty of representing an author living in our own times, with whose supposed works or alleged genius, and those of any one actually existing, the reader can establish no identification, and he is therefore either compelled constantly to humour the delusion by keeping his imagination on the stretch, or lazily driven to confound the Author *in* the Book with the Author *of* the Book.* But I own, also, I fancied, while aware

* In some foreign journal I have been much amused by a credulity of this latter description, and seen the various adventures of Mr Maltravers gravely appropriated to the embellishment of my own life, including the attachment to the original of poor Alice Darvil; who now, by the way, must be at least seventy years of age, with a grandchild nearly as old as myself.

of this objection, and in spite of it, that so much not hitherto said might be conveyed with advantage through the lips or in the life of an imaginary writer of our own time, that I was contented, on the whole, either to task the imagination, or submit to the suspicions of the reader. All that my own egotism appropriates in the book are some occasional remarks, the natural result of practical experience. With the life or the character, the adventures or the humours, the errors or the good qualities, of Maltravers himself, I have nothing to do, except as the narrator and inventor.

E. B. L.

BOOK I.

Τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιῶσδε βόσκεται
Χώροισιν αὐτοῦ· καὶ νιν οὐθὲλπος θεοῦ
Οὐδὲ ὅμβρος, οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονέι
Ἄλλ' ἡδοναῖς ἀμοχθον ἔξαίρει βίον.

SOPH. *Trachin.* 144.

“ Youth pastures in a valley of its own :
The glare of noon—the rains and winds of heaven
Mar not the calm yet virgin of all care.
But ever with sweet joys it buildeth up
The airy halls of life.”

ERNEST MALTRAVERS.



BOOK I.—CHAPTER I.

My meaning in't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid . . . yet, who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?—*All's Well that Ends Well*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

SOME four miles distant from one of our northern manufacturing towns, in the year 18—, was a wide and desolate common ; a more dreary spot it is impossible to conceive—the herbage grew up in sickly patches from the midst of a black and stony soil. Not a tree was to be seen in the whole of the comfortless expanse. Nature herself had seemed to desert the solitude, as if scared by the ceaseless din of the neighbouring forges ; and even Art, which presses all things into service, had disdained to cull use or beauty from these unpromising demesnes. There was something weird and primeval in the aspect of the place ; especially when in the long nights of winter you beheld the distant fires and lights, which give to the vicinity of certain manufactories so preternatural an appearance, streaming red and wild

over the waste. So abandoned by man appeared the spot, that you found it difficult to imagine that it was only from human fires that its bleak and barren desolation was illumined. For miles along the moor you detected no vestige of any habitation ; but as you approached the verge nearest to the town, you could just perceive, at a little distance from the main road by which the common was intersected, a small, solitary, and miserable hovel.

Within this lonely abode, at the time in which my story opens, were seated two persons. The one was a man of about fifty years of age, and in a squalid and wretched garb, which was yet relieved by an affectation of ill-assorted finery. A silk handkerchief, which boasted the ornament of a large brooch of false stones, was twisted jauntily round a muscular but meagre throat ; his tattered breeches were also decorated by buckles, one of pinchbeck, and one of steel. His frame was lean, but broad and sinewy, indicative of considerable strength. His countenance was prematurely marked by deep furrows, and his grizzled hair waved over a low, rugged, and forbidding brow, on which there hung an everlasting frown that no smile from the lips (and the man smiled often) could chase away. It was a face that spoke of long-continued and hardened vice—it was one in which the Past had written indelible characters. The brand of the hangman could not have stamped it more plainly, nor have more unequivocally warned the suspicion of honest or timid men.

He was employed in counting some few and paltry

coins, which, though an easy matter to ascertain their value, he told and retold, as if the act could increase the amount. "There must be some mistake here, Alice," he said in a low and muttered tone : "we can't be so low—you know I had two pounds in the drawer but Monday, and now—Alice, you must have stolen some of the money—curse you !"

The person thus addressed sat at the opposite side of the smouldering and sullen fire ; she now looked quietly up,—and her face singularly contrasted that of the man.

She seemed about fifteen years of age, and her complexion was remarkably pure and delicate, even despite the sunburnt tinge which her habits of toil had brought it. Her auburn hair hung in loose and natural curls over her forehead, and its luxuriance was remarkable even in one so young. Her countenance was beautiful, nay, even faultless, in its small and childlike features ; but the expression pained you—it was so vacant. In repose it was almost the expression of an idiot ; but when she spoke, or smiled, or even moved a muscle, the eyes, colour, lips, kindled into a life which proved that the intellect was still there, though but imperfectly awakened. . . .

"I did not steal any, father," she said, in a quiet voice ; "but I should like to have taken some, only I knew you would beat me if I did."

"And what do you want money for ?"

"To get food when I'm hungered."

"Nothing else ?"

"I don't know."

The girl paused. "Why don't you let me," she said, after a while,—"why don't you let me go and work with the other girls at the factory? I should make money there for you and me both."

The man smiled—such a smile—it seemed to bring into sudden play all the revolting characteristics of his countenance. "Child," he said, "you are just fifteen, and a sad fool you are: perhaps if you went to the factory, you would get away from me; and what should I do without you? No, I think, as you are so pretty, you might get more money another way."

The girl did not seem to understand this allusion; but repeated, vacantly, "I should like to go to the factory."

"Stuff!" said the man angrily; "I have three minds to——"

Here he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door of the hovel.

The man grew pale. "What can that be?" he muttered. "The hour is late—near eleven. Again—again! Ask who knocks, Alice."

The girl stood for a moment or so at the door; and as she stood, her form rounded yet slight, her earnest look, her varying colour, her tender youth, and a singular grace of attitude and gesture, would have inspired an artist with the very ideal of rustic beauty.

After a pause, she placed her lips to a chink in the door, and repeated her father's question.

"Pray pardon me," said a clear, loud, yet courteous

voice, "but seeing a light at your window, I have ventured to ask if any one within will conduct me to — ; I will pay the service handsomely."

"Open the door, Alley," said the owner of the hut.

The girl drew a large wooden bolt from the door, and a tall figure crossed the threshold.

The new-comer was in the first bloom of youth, perhaps about eighteen years of age, and his air and appearance surprised both sire and daughter. Alone, on foot, at such an hour, it was impossible for any one to mistake him for other than a gentleman ; yet his dress was plain, and somewhat soiled by dust, and he carried a small knapsack on his shoulder. As he entered, he lifted his hat with somewhat of foreign urbanity, and a profusion of fair brown hair fell partially over a high and commanding forehead. His features were handsome, without being eminently so, and his aspect was at once bold and prepossessing.

"I am much obliged by your civility," he said, advancing carelessly, and addressing the man, who surveyed him with a scrutinising eye ; "and trust, my good fellow, that you will increase the obligation by accompanying me to — ."

"You can't miss well your way," said the man, surly : "the lights will direct you."

"They have rather misled me, for they seem to surround the whole common, and there is no path across it that I can see ; however, if you will put me in the right road, I will not trouble you further."

"It is very late," replied the churlish landlord, equivocally.

"The better reason why I should be at ——. Come, my good friend, put on your hat, and I will give you half a guinea for your trouble."

The man advanced, then halted ; again surveyed his guest, and said, "Are you quite alone, sir ?"

"Quite."

"Probably you are known at —— ?"

"Not I. But what matters that to you ? I am a stranger in these parts."

"It is full four miles."

"So far, and I am fearfully tired already !" exclaimed the young man, with impatience. As he spoke, he drew out his watch. "Past eleven, too !"

The watch caught the eye of the cottager ; that evil eye sparkled. He passed his hand over his brow. "I am thinking, sir," he said, in a more civil tone than he had yet assumed, "that as you are so tired, and the hour is so late, you might almost as well——"

"What ?" exclaimed the stranger, stamping somewhat petulantly.

"I don't like to mention it ; but my poor roof is at your service, and I would go with you to —— at day-break to-morrow."

The stranger stared at the cottager, and then at the dingy walls of the hut. He was about, very abruptly, to reject the hospitable proposal, when his eye rested suddenly on the form of Alice, who stood, eager-eyed and open-mouthed, gazing on the handsome intruder.

As she caught his eye, she blushed deeply, and turned aside. The view seemed to change the intentions of the stranger. He hesitated a moment, then muttered between his teeth ; and sinking his knapsack on the ground, he cast himself into a chair beside the fire, stretched his limbs, and cried gaily, “So be it, my host : shut up your house again. Bring me a cup of beer and a crust of bread, and so much for supper ! As for bed, this chair will do vastly well.”

“Perhaps we can manage better for you than that chair,” answered the host. “But our best accommodation must seem bad enough to a gentleman : we are very poor people—hard-working, but very poor.”

“Never mind me,” answered the stranger, busying himself in stirring the fire ; “I am tolerably well accustomed to greater hardships than sleeping on a chair in an honest man’s house ; and though you are poor, I will take it for granted you are honest.”

The man grinned ; and, turning to Alice, bade her spread what their larder would afford. Some crusts of bread, some cold potatoes, and some tolerably strong beer, composed all the fare set before the traveller.

Despite his previous boasts, the young man made a wry face at these Socratic preparations, while he drew his chair to the board. But his look grew more gay as he caught Alice’s eye ; and as she lingered by the table, and faltered out some hesitating words of apology, he seized her hand, and pressing it tenderly—“Prettiest of lasses,” said he—and while he spoke he gazed on her with undisguised admiration—“a man who has

travelled on foot all day through the ugliest country within the three seas, is sufficiently refreshed at night by the sight of so fair a face."

Alice hastily withdrew her hand, and went and seated herself in a corner of the room, whence she continued to look at the stranger with her usual vacant gaze, but with a half-smile upon her rosy lips.

Alice's father looked hard first at one, then at the other.

"Eat, sir," said he, with a sort of chuckle, "and no fine words. Poor Alice is honest, as you said just now."

"To be sure," answered the traveller, employing with great zeal a set of strong, even, and dazzling teeth at the tough crusts—"to be sure she is. I did not mean to offend you; but the fact is, that I am half a foreigner; and abroad, you know, one may say a civil thing to a pretty girl without hurting her feelings, or her father's either."

"Half a foreigner! why, you talk English as well as I do," said the host, whose intonation and words were, on the whole, a little above his station.

The stranger smiled. "Thank you for the compliment," said he. "What I meant was, that I have been a great deal abroad; in fact, I have just returned from Germany. But I am English-born."

"And going home?"

"Yes."

"Far from hence?"

"About thirty miles, I believe."

"You are young, sir, to be alone."

The traveller made no answer, but finished his uninviting repast, and drew his chair again to the fire. He then thought he had sufficiently ministered to his host's curiosity to be entitled to the gratification of his own.

"You work at the factories, I suppose ?" said he.

"I do, sir. Bad times."

"And your pretty daughter ?"

"Minds the house."

"Have you no other children ?"

"No ; one mouth besides my own is as much as I can feed, and that scarcely. But you would like to rest now : you can have my bed, sir ; I can sleep here."

"By no means," said the stranger, quickly ; "just put a few more coals on the fire, and leave me to make myself comfortable."

The man rose, and did not press his offer, but left the room for a supply of fuel. Alice remained in her corner.

"Sweetheart," said the traveller, looking round and satisfying himself that they were alone ; "I should sleep well if I could get one kiss from those coral lips."

Alice hid her face with her hands.

"Do I vex you ?"

"O no, sir."

At this assurance the traveller rose, and approached Alice softly. He drew away her hands from her face, when she said, gently, "Have you much money about you ?"

"O, the mercenary baggage !" said the traveller to

himself ; and then replied aloud, “ Why, pretty one ? —Do you sell your kisses so high, then ? ”

Alice frowned, and tossed the hair from her brow. “ If you have money,” she said in a whisper, “ don’t say so to father. Don’t sleep, if you can help it. I’m afraid—hush—he comes ! ”

The young man returned to his seat with an altered manner ; and as his host entered, he for the first time surveyed him closely. The imperfect glimmer of the half-dying and single candle threw into strong lights and shades the marked, rugged, and ferocious features of the cottager ; and the eye of the traveller, glancing from the face to the limbs and frame, saw that whatever of violence the mind might design, the body might well execute.

The traveller sank into a gloomy reverie. The wind howled—the rain beat—through the casement shone no solitary star—all was dark and sombre ;—should he proceed alone—might he not suffer a greater danger upon that wide and desert moor—might not the host follow—assault him in the dark ? He had no weapon, save a stick. But within, he had at least a rude resource in the large kitchen-poker that was beside him. At all events, it would be better to wait for the present. He might at any time, when alone, withdraw the bolt from the door, and slip out unobserved.

Such was the fruit of his meditations while his host plied the fire.

“ You will sleep sound to-night,” said his entertainer, smiling.

"Humph! Why, I am *over*-fatigued; I daresay it will be an hour or two before I fall asleep; but when I once *am* asleep, I sleep like a rock!"

"Come, Alice," said her father, "let us leave the gentleman. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night—good-night," returned the traveller, yawning.

The father and daughter disappeared through a door in the corner of the room. The guest heard them ascend the creaking stairs—all was still.

"Fool that I am," said the traveller to himself; "will nothing teach me that I am no longer a student at Gottingen, or cure me of these pedestrian adventures? Had it not been for that girl's big blue eyes, I should be safe at — by this time; if, indeed, the grim father had not murdered me by the road. However, we'll balk him yet: another half hour, and I am on the moor: we must give him time. And in the meanwhile here is the poker. At the worst it is but one to one; but the churl is strongly built."

Although the traveller thus endeavoured to cheer his courage, his heart beat more loudly than its wont. He kept his eyes stationed on the door by which the cottagers had vanished, and his hand on the massive poker.

While the stranger was thus employed below, Alice, instead of turning to her own narrow cell, went into her father's room.

The cottager was seated at the foot of his bed, muttering to himself, and with eyes fixed on the ground.

The girl stood before him, gazing on his face, and with her arms lightly crossed above her bosom.

"It must be worth twenty guineas," said the host, abruptly to himself.

"What is it to you, father, what the gentleman's watch is worth?"

The man started.

"You mean," continued Alice, quietly—"you mean to do some injury to that young man; but you shall not."

The cottager's face grew black as night. "How," he began in a loud voice, but suddenly dropped the tone into a deep growl—"how dare you talk to me so?—go to bed—go to bed."

"No, father."

"No?"

"I will not stir from this room until daybreak."

"We will soon see that," said the man, with an oath.

"Touch me, and I will alarm the gentleman, and tell him that——"

"What?"

The girl approached her father, placed her lips to his ear, and whispered, "That you intend to murder him."

The cottager's frame trembled from head to foot; he shut his eyes, and gasped painfully for breath. "Alice," said he, gently, after a pause—"Alice, we are often nearly starving."

"*I am—you never!*"

"Wretch, yes! if I do drink too much one day, I

pinch for it the next. But go to bed, I say—I mean no harm to the young man. Think you I would twist myself a rope ?—no, no ;—go along, go along.”

Alice’s face, which had before been earnest, and almost intelligent, now relapsed into its wonted vacant stare.

“To be sure, father, they would hang you if you cut his throat. Don’t forget that ;—good-night ;” and so saying, she walked to her own opposite chamber.

Left alone, the host pressed his hand tightly to his forehead, and remained motionless for nearly half an hour.

“If that cursed girl would but sleep,” he muttered at last, turning round, “it might be done at once. And there’s the pond behind, as deep as a well ; and I might say at daybreak that the boy had bolted. He seems quite a stranger here—nobody ’ll miss him. He must have plenty of blunt to give half-a-guinea to a guide across a common ! I want money, and I won’t work—if I can help it, at least.”

While he thus soliloquised, the air seemed to oppress him ; he opened the window, he leant out—the rain beat upon him. He closed the window with an oath ; took off his shoes, stole to the threshold, and by the candle, which he shaded with his hand, surveyed the opposite door. It was closed. He then bent anxiously forward and listened.

“All’s quiet,” thought he ; “perhaps he sleeps already. I will steal down. If Jack Walters would but come to-night, the job would be done charmingly.”

With that he crept gently down the stairs. In a corner, at the foot of the staircase, lay sundry matters, a few fagots, and a cleaver. He caught up the last. "Aha," he muttered ; "and there's the sledge-hammer somewhere for Walters." Leaning himself against the door, he then applied his eye to a chink which admitted a dim view of the room within, lighted fitfully by the fire.

CHAPTER II.

What have we here ?

A carrion death !

Merchant of Venice. Act ii. Sc. 7.

IT was about this time that the stranger deemed it advisable to commence his retreat. The slight and suppressed sound of voices, which at first he had heard above in the conversation of the father and child, had died away. The stillness at once encouraged and warned him. He stole to the front door, softly undid the bolt, and found the door locked, and the key missing. He had not observed that, during his repast, and ere his suspicions had been aroused, his host, in replacing the bar and relocking the entrance, had abstracted the key. His fears were now confirmed. His next thought was the window—the shutter only protected it half-way, and was easily removed ; but the aperture of the lattice, which only opened in part, like most cottage casements, was far too small to admit his person. His only means of escape was in breaking the whole window ; a matter not to be effected without noise and consequent risk.

He paused in despair. He was naturally of a strong-

nerved and gallant temperament, nor unaccustomed to those perils of life and limb which German students delight to brave ; but his heart well-nigh failed him at that moment. The silence became distinct and burdensome to him, and a chill moisture gathered to his brow. While he stood irresolute and in suspense, striving to collect his thoughts, his ear, preternaturally sharpened by fear, caught the faint muffled sound of creeping footsteps—he heard the stairs creak. The sound broke the spell. The previous vague apprehension gave way when the danger became actually at hand. His presence of mind returned at once. He went back quickly to the fireplace, seized the poker, and began stirring the fire and coughing loud, and indicating as vigorously as possible that he was wide awake.

He felt that he was watched—he felt that he was in momently peril. He felt that the appearance of slumber would be the signal for a mortal conflict. Time passed, all remained silent ; nearly half an hour had elapsed since he had heard the steps upon the stairs. His situation began to prey upon his nerves ; it irritated them—it became intolerable. It was not, now, fear that he experienced, it was the overwrought sense of mortal enmity—the consciousness that a man may feel who knows that the eye of a tiger is on him, and who, while in suspense he has regained his courage, foresees that, sooner or later, the spring must come ;—the suspense itself becomes an agony, and he desires to expedite the deadly struggle he cannot shun.

Utterly incapable any longer to bear his own sensa-

tions, the traveller rose at last, fixed his eyes upon the fatal door, and was about to cry aloud to the listener to enter, when he heard a slight tap at the window ; it was twice repeated, and at the third time a low voice pronounced the name of Darvil. It was clear, then, that accomplices had arrived ; it was no longer against one man that he should have to contend. He drew his breath heard, and listened with throbbing ears. He heard steps without upon the plashing soil ; they retired—all was still.

He paused a few minutes, and walked deliberately and firmly to the inner door, at which he fancied his host stationed ; with a steady hand he attempted to open the door ; it was fastened on the opposite side. “ So ! ” said he, bitterly, and grinding his teeth ; “ I must die like a rat in a cage. Well, I’ll die biting.”

He returned to his former post, drew himself up to his full height, and stood grasping his homely weapon, prepared for the worst, and not altogether unelated with a proud consciousness of his own natural advantages of activity, stature, strength, and daring. Minutes rolled on ! the silence was broken by some one at the inner door ; he heard the bolt gently withdrawn. He raised his weapon with both hands ; and started to find the intruder was only Alice. She came in with bare feet, and pale as marble, her finger on her lips.

She approached—she touched him.

“ They are in the shed behind,” she whispered, “ looking for the sledge-hammer : they mean to murder you : get you gone—quick.”

"How?—the door is locked."

"Stay. I have taken the key from his room."

She gained the door, applied the key—the door yielded. The traveller threw his knapsack once more over his shoulder, and made but one stride to the threshold. The girl stopped him. "Don't say anything about it; he is my father—they would hang him."

"No, no. But you?—are safe, I trust?—depend on my gratitude. I shall be at —— to-morrow—the best inn—seek me if you can! Which way now?"

"Keep to the left."

The stranger was already several paces distant; through the darkness, and in the midst of the rain, he fled on with the speed of youth. The girl lingered an instant, sighed, then laughed aloud; closed and rebarred the door, and was creeping back, when from the inner entrance advanced the grim father, and another man, of broad, short, sinewy frame, his arms bare, and wielding a large hammer.

"How?" asked the host; "Alice here, and—hell and the devil! have you let him go?"

"I told you that you should not harm him."

With a violent oath, the ruffian struck his daughter to the ground, sprang over her body, unbarred the door, and, accompanied by his comrade, set off in vague pursuit of his intended victim.

CHAPTER III.

You knew—none so well—of my daughter's flight.

Merchant of Venice, Act iii. Sc. 1.

THE day dawned ; it was a mild, damp, hazy morning ; the sod sank deep beneath the foot, the roads were heavy with mire, and the rain of the past night lay here and there in broad shallow pools. Towards the town, waggons, carts, pedestrian groups were already moving ; and now and then you caught the sharp horn of some early coach, wheeling its be-cloaked outside and be-nightcapped inside passengers along the northern thoroughfare.

A young man bounded over a stile into the road just opposite to the milestone that declared him to be one mile from —.

“Thank Heaven !” he said, almost aloud. “After spending the night wandering about morasses like a will-o'-the-wisp, I approach a town at last. Thank Heaven, again, and for all its mercies, this night ! I breathe freely. I AM SAFE.”

He walked on somewhat rapidly ; he passed a slow waggon—he passed a group of mechanics—he passed a drove of sheep, and now he saw walking leisurely be-

fore him a single figure. It was a girl, in a worn and humble dress, who seemed to seek her weary way with pain and languor. He was about also to pass her, when he heard a low cry. He turned, and beheld in the wayfarer his preserver of the previous night.

“Heavens ! is it indeed you ? Can I believe my eyes ?”

“I was coming to seek you, sir,” said the girl, faintly. “I too have escaped ; I shall never go back to father ; I have no roof to cover my head now.”

“Poor child ! but how is this ? Did they ill-use you for releasing me ?”

“Father knocked me down, and beat me again when he came back ; but that is not all,” she added, in a very low tone.

“What else ?”

The girl grew red and white by turns. She set her teeth rigidly, stopped short, and then, walking on quicker than before, replied—“It don’t matter ; I will never go back—I’m alone now. What—what shall I do ?” and she wrung her hands.

The traveller’s pity was deeply moved. “My good girl,” said he, earnestly, “you have saved my life, and I am not ungrateful. Here” (and he placed some gold in her hand), “get yourself a lodging, food, and rest ; you look as if you wanted them ; and see me again this evening when it is dark, and we can talk unobserved.”

The girl took the money passively, and looked up in his face while he spoke ; the look was so unsuspecting, and the whole countenance was so beautifully modest

and virgin-like, that had any evil passion prompted the traveller's last words, it must have fled scared and abashed as he met the gaze.

"My poor girl," said he, embarrassed, and after a short pause ;—"you are very young, and very, very pretty. In this town you will be exposed to many temptations : take care where you lodge. You have, no doubt, friends here ?"

"Friends ?—what are friends ?" answered Alice.

"Have you no relations—no *mother's kin* ?"

"None."

"Do you know where to ask shelter ?"

"No, sir ; for I can't go where father goes, lest he should find me out."

"Well, then, seek some quiet inn, and meet me this evening, just here, half a mile from the town, at seven. I will try and think of something for you in the meanwhile. But you seem tired—you walk with pain ; perhaps it will fatigue you to come—I mean, you had rather perhaps rest another day."

"Oh, no, no ! it will do me good to see you again, sir."

The young man's eyes met hers, and hers were not withdrawn ; their soft blue was suffused with tears—they penetrated his soul.

He turned away hastily, and saw that they were already the subject of curious observation to the various passengers that overtook them. "Don't forget !" he whispered, and strode on with a pace that soon brought him to the town.

He inquired for the principal hotel—entered it with an air that bespoke that nameless consciousness of superiority which belongs to those accustomed to purchase welcome wherever welcome is bought and sold—and before a blazing fire and no unsubstantial breakfast, forgot all the terrors of the past night, or rather felt rejoiced to think he had added a new and strange hazard to the catalogue of adventures already experienced by Ernest Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV.

Con una Dama tenia
Un galan conversacion.*

MORATIN: *El Téatro Espanol*.—Num. 15.

MALTRAVERS was first at the appointed place. His character was in most respects singularly energetic, decided, and premature in its development; but not so in regard to women: with them he was the creature of the moment; and, driven to and fro by whatever impulse, or whatever passion, caught the caprice of a wild, roving, and all-poetical imagination, Maltravers was, half unconsciously, a poet—a poet of action, and woman was his muse.

He had formed no plan of conduct towards the poor girl he was to meet. He meant no harm to her. If she had been less handsome, he would have been equally grateful; and her dress, and youth, and condition, would equally have compelled him to select the hour of dusk for an interview.

He arrived at the spot. The winter night had already descended; but a sharp frost had set in: the air was clear, the stars were bright, and the long shadows

* With a dame he held a gallant conversation.

slept, still and calm, along the broad road and the whitened fields beyond.

He walked briskly to and fro, without much thought of the interview or its object, half chanting old verses, German and English, to himself, and stopping to gaze every moment at the silent stars.

At length he saw Alice approach : she came up to him timidly and gently. His heart beat more quickly ; he felt that he was young and alone with beauty. "Sweet girl," he said, with involuntary and mechanical compliment, "how well this light becomes you ! How shall I thank you for not forgetting me !"

Alice surrendered her hand to his without a struggle.

"What is your name ?" said he, bending his face down to hers.

"Alice Darvil."

"And your terrible father—*is* he, in truth, your father ?"

"Indeed he is my father and mother too !"

"What made you suspect his intention to murder me ? Has he ever attempted the like crime ?"

"No ; but lately he has often talked of robbery. He is very poor, sir. And when I saw his eye, and when afterwards, while your back was turned, he took the key from the door, I felt that—that you were in danger."

"Good girl—go on."

"I told him so when we went up-stairs. I did not know what to believe, when he said he would not hurt

you ; but I stole the key of the front door, which he had thrown on the table, and went to my room. I listened at my door ; I heard him go down the stairs ; he stopped there for some time ; and I watched him from above. The place where he was, opened to the field by the backway. After some time, I heard a voice whisper him : I knew the voice, and then they both went out by the backway ; so I stole down, and went out and listened ; and I knew the other man was John Walters. I'm afraid of *him*, sir. And then Walters said, says he, ‘I will get the hammer, and, sleep or wake, we'll do it.’ And father said, ‘It's in the shed.’ So I saw there was no time to be lost, sir, and —and—but you know all the rest.”

“But how did you escape ?”

“Oh, my father, after talking to Walters, came to my room, and beat and—and—frightened me ; and when he was gone to bed, I put on my clothes and stole out ; it was just light ; and I walked on till I met you.”

“Poor child ! in what a den of vice you have been brought up !”

“Anan, sir.”

“She don't understand me. Have you been taught to read and write ?”

“Oh, no !”

“But I suppose you have been taught, at least, to say your catechism—and you pray sometimes ?”

“I have prayed to father not to beat me.”

“But to God ?”

“God, sir!—what is that?”*

Maltravers drew back, shocked and appalled. Premature philosopher as he was, this depth of ignorance perplexed his wisdom. He had read all the disputes of schoolmen, whether or not the notion of a Supreme Being is innate; but he had never before been brought face to face with a living creature who was unconscious of a God.

After a pause, he said—“My poor girl, we misunderstand each other. You know that there is a God?”

“No, sir.”

“Did no one ever tell you who made the stars you now survey—the earth on which you tread?”

“No.”

“And have you never thought about it yourself?”

“Why should I? What has that to do with being cold and hungry?”

Maltravers looked incredulous.—“You see that great building, with the spire rising in the starlight?”

“Yes, sir, sure.”

“What is it called?”

“Why, a church.”

“Did you never go into it?”

“No.”

* This ignorance—indeed the whole sketch of Alice—is from the life; nor is such ignorance, accompanied by what almost seems an instinctive or intuitive notion of right or wrong, very uncommon, as our police reports can testify. In the ‘Examiner’ for, I think, the year 1835, will be found the case of a young girl ill-treated by her father, whose answers to the interrogatories of the magistrate are very similar to those of Alice to the questions of Maltravers.

“ What do people do there ? ”

“ Father says one man talks nonsense, and the other folk listen to him.”

“ Your father is——no matter. Good heavens ! what shall I do with this unhappy child ? ”

“ Yes, sir, I am very unhappy,” said Alice, catching at the last words ; and the tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

Maltravers never was more touched in his life. Whatever thoughts of gallantry might have entered his young head, had he found Alice such as he might reasonably have expected, he now felt there was a kind of sanctity in her ignorance ; and his gratitude and kindly sentiment towards her took almost a brotherly aspect.—“ You know, at least, what school is ? ” he asked.

“ Yes, I have talked with girls who go to school.”

“ Would you like to go there too ? ”

“ Oh no, sir—pray not ! ”

“ What should you like to do, then ? Speak out, child. I owe you so much that I should be too happy to make you comfortable and contented in your own way.”

“ I should like to live with you, sir.” Maltravers started, and half smiled, and coloured. But looking on her eyes, which were fixed earnestly on his, there was so much artlessness in their soft, unconscious gaze, that he saw she was wholly ignorant of the interpretation that might be put upon so candid a confession.

I have said that Maltravers was a wild, enthusiastic,

odd being—he was, in fact, full of strange German romance and metaphysical speculations. He had once shut himself up for months to study astrology, and been even suspected of a serious hunt after the philosopher's stone ; another time he had narrowly escaped with life and liberty from a frantic conspiracy of the young republicans of his university, in which, being bolder and madder than most of them, he had been an active ringleader : it was, indeed, some such folly that had compelled him to quit Germany sooner than himself or his parents desired. He had nothing of the sober Englishman about him. Whatever was strange and eccentric had an irresistible charm for Ernest Maltravers. And agreeably to this disposition, he now revolved an idea that enchanted his mobile and fantastic philosophy. He himself would educate this charming girl—he would write fair and heavenly characters upon this blank page—he would act the Saint Preux to this Julie of Nature. Alas ! he did not think of the result which the parallel should have suggested ! At that age Ernest Maltravers never damped the ardour of an experiment by the anticipation of consequences.

“So,” he said, after a short reverie—“so you would like to live with me ? But, Alice, we must not fall in love with each other.”

“I don't understand, sir.”

“Never mind,” said Maltravers, a little disconcerted.

“I always wished to go into service.”

“Ha !”

"And you would be a kind master."

Maltravers was half disenchanted.

"No very flattering preference," thought he: "so much the safer for us. Well, Alice, it shall be as you wish. Are you comfortable where you are, in your new lodging?"

"No."

"Why, they do not insult you?"

"No; but they make a noise, and I like to be quiet to think of you."

The young philosopher was reconciled again to his scheme.

"Well, Alice—go back—I will take a cottage tomorrow, and you shall be my servant, and I will teach you to read and write, and say your prayers, and know that you have a Father above who loves you better than he below. Meet me again at the same hour tomorrow. Why do you cry, Alice? why do you cry?"

"Because—because," sobbed the girl, "I am so happy, and I shall live with you and see you."

"Go, child—go, child," said Maltravers, hastily; and he walked away with a quicker pulse than became his new character of master and preceptor.

He looked back, and saw the girl gazing at him; he waved his hand, and she moved on and followed him slowly back to the town.

Maltravers, though not an elder son, was the heir of affluent fortunes; he enjoyed a munificent allowance that sufficed for the whims of a youth who had learned in Germany none of the extravagant notions common

to young Englishmen of similar birth and prospects. He was a spoiled child, with no law but his own fancy —his return home was not expected—there was nothing to prevent the indulgence of his new caprice. The next day he hired a cottage in the neighbourhood, which was one of those pretty thatched edifices, with verandahs and monthly roses, a conservatory and a lawn, which justify the English proverb about a cottage and love. It had been built by a mercantile bachelor for some fair Rosamond, and did credit to his taste. An old woman, let with the house, was to cook and do the work. Alice was but a nominal servant. Neither the old woman nor the landlord comprehended the Platonic intentions of the young stranger. But he paid his rent in advance, and they were not particular. He, however, thought it prudent to conceal his name. It was one sure to be known in a town not very distant from the residence of his father, a wealthy and long-descended country gentleman. He adopted, therefore, the common name of Butler ; which, indeed, belonged to one of his maternal connections, and by that name alone was he known both in the neighbourhood and to Alice. From her he would not have sought concealment—but somehow or other no occasion ever presented itself to induce him to talk much to her of his parentage or birth.

CHAPTER V.

Thought would destroy their Paradise.—GRAY.

MALTRAVERS found Alice as docile a pupil as any reasonable preceptor might have desired. But still, reading and writing—they are very uninteresting elements! Had the groundwork been laid, it might have been delightful to raise the fairy palace of knowledge; but the digging the foundations and the constructing the cellars is weary labour. Perhaps he felt it so—for in a few days Alice was handed over to the very oldest and ugliest writing-master that the neighbouring town could afford. The poor girl at first wept much at the exchange; but the grave remonstrances and solemn exhortations of Maltravers reconciled her at last, and she promised to work hard and pay every attention to her lessons. I am not sure, however, that it was the tedium of the work that deterred the idealist—perhaps he felt its danger—and at the bottom of his sparkling dreams and brilliant follies lay a sound, generous, and noble heart. He was fond of pleasure, and had been already the darling of the sentimental German ladies.

But he was too young and too vivid, and too romantic, to be what is called a sensualist. He could not look upon a fair face, and a guileless smile, and all the ineffable symmetry of a woman's shape, with the eye of a man buying cattle for base uses. He very easily fell in love, or fancied he did, it is true ; but then he could not separate desire from fancy, or calculate the game of passion without bringing the heart or the imagination into the matter. And though Alice was very pretty and very engaging, he was not yet in love with her, and he had no intention of becoming so.

He felt the evening somewhat long, when, for the first time, Alice discontinued her usual lesson ; but Maltravers had abundant resources in himself. He placed Shakespeare and Schiller on his table, and lighted his German meerschaum—he read till he became inspired, and then he wrote—and when he had composed a few stanzas, he was not contented till he had set them to music, and tried their melody with his voice. For he had all the passion of a German for song and music—that wild Maltravers !—and his voice was sweet, his taste consummate, his science profound. As the sun puts out a star, so the full blaze of his imagination, fairly kindled, extinguished for the time his fairy fancy for his beautiful pupil.

It was late that night when Maltravers went to bed—and as he passed through the narrow corridor that led to his chamber, he heard a light step flying before him, and caught the glimpse of a female figure escaping through a distant door. “The silly child !” thought

he, at once divining the cause ; “she has been listening to my singing. I shall scold her.” But he forgot that resolution.

The next day, and the next, and many days passed, and Maltravers saw but little of the pupil for whose sake he had shut himself up in a country cottage, in the depth of winter. Still he did not repent his purpose, nor was he in the least tired of his seclusion—he would not inspect Alice’s progress, for he was certain he should be dissatisfied with its slowness—and people, however handsome, cannot learn to read and write in a day. But he amused himself, notwithstanding. He was glad of an opportunity to be alone with his own thoughts, for he was at one of those periodical epochs of life when we like to pause and breathe awhile, in brief respite from that methodical race in which we run to the grave. He wished to re-collect the stores of his past experience, and repose on his own mind, before he started afresh upon the active world. The weather was cold and inclement ; but Ernest Maltravers was a hardy lover of nature, and neither snow nor frost could detain him from his daily rambles. So about noon he regularly threw aside books and papers, and took his hat and staff, and went whistling or humming his favourite airs through the dreary streets, or along the bleak waters, or amidst the leafless woods, just as the humour seized him ; for he was not an Edwin or Harold, who reserved speculation only for lonely brooks and pastoral hills. Maltravers delighted to contemplate nature in men as well as in sheep or

trees. The humblest alley in a crowded town had something poetical for him : he was ever ready to mix in a crowd, if it were only gathered round a barrel-organ or a dog-fight, and listen to all that was said, and notice all that was done. And this I take to be the true poetical temperament essential to every artist who aspires to be something more than a scene-painter. But, above all things, he was most interested in any display of human passions or affections ; he loved to see the true colours of the heart, where they are most transparent—in the uneducated and poor—for he was something of an optimist, and had a hearty faith in the loveliness of our nature. Perhaps, indeed, he owed much of the insight into and mastery over character that he was afterwards considered to display, to his disbelief that there is any wickedness so dark as not to be susceptible of the light in some place or another. But Maltravers had his fits of unsociability, and then nothing but the most solitary scenes delighted him. Winter or summer, barren waste or prodigal verdure, all had beauty in his eyes ; for their beauty lay in his own soul, through which he beheld them. From these walks he would return home at dusk, take his simple meal, rhyme or read away the long evenings with such alternation as music or the dreamy thoughts of a young man with gay life before him could afford. Happy Maltravers !—youth and genius have luxuries all the Rothschilds cannot purchase ! And yet, Maltravers, you are ambitious !—life moves too slowly for you !—you would push on the wheels of the clock ! Fool—

brilliant fool!—you are eighteen, and a poet!—What more can you desire?—Bid Time stop for ever!

One morning Ernest rose earlier than his wont, and sauntered carelessly through the conservatory which adjoined his sitting-room; observing the plants with placid curiosity (for besides being a little of a botanist, he had odd visionary notions about the life of plants, and he saw in them a hundred mysteries which the herbalists do not teach us), when he heard a low and very musical voice singing at a little distance. He listened, and recognised, with surprise, words of his own, which he had lately set to music, and was sufficiently pleased with to sing nightly.

When the song ended, Maltravers stole softly through the conservatory, and as he opened the door which led into the garden, he saw at the open window of a little room which was apportioned to Alice, and jutted out from the building in the fanciful irregularity common to ornamental cottages, the form of his discarded pupil. She did not observe him, and it was not till he twice called her by name that she started from her thoughtful and melancholy posture.

“Alice,” said he, gently, “put on your bonnet, and walk with me in the garden: you look pale, child; the fresh air will do you good.”

Alice coloured and smiled, and in a few moments was by his side. Maltravers, meanwhile, had gone in and lighted his meerschaum, for it was his great inspirer whenever his thoughts were perplexed, or he felt his usual fluency likely to fail him, and such was

the case now. With this faithful ally he awaited Alice in the little walk that circled the lawn, amidst shrubs and evergreens.

"Alice," said he, after a pause; but he stopped short.

Alice looked up to him with grave respect.

"Tush!" said Maltravers; "perhaps the smoke is unpleasant to you. It is a bad habit of mine."

"No, sir," answered Alice; and she seemed disappointed. Maltravers paused and picked up a snowdrop.

"It is pretty," he said; "do you love flowers?"

"Oh, dearly," answered Alice, with some enthusiasm; "I never saw many till I came here."

"Now then, I can go on," thought Maltravers: why, I cannot say, for I do not see the *sequitur*; but on he went *in medias res*. "Alice, you sing charmingly."

"Ah! sir, you—you—" she stopped abruptly, and trembled visibly.

"Yes, I overheard you, Alice."

"And you are angry?"

"I!—Heaven forbid! It is a *talent*, but you don't know what that is; I mean it is an excellent thing to have an ear, and a voice, and a heart for music; and you have all three."

He paused, for he felt his hand touched; Alice suddenly clasped and kissed it. Maltravers thrilled through his whole frame; but there was something in the girl's look that showed she was wholly unaware that she had committed an unmaidenly or forward action.

"I was so afraid you would be angry," she said, wiping her eyes as she dropped his hand; "and now I suppose you know all."

"All!"

"Yes; how I listened to you every evening, and lay awake the whole night with the music ringing in my ears, till I tried to go over it myself; and so at last I ventured to sing aloud. I like that much better than learning to read."

All this was delightful to Maltravers: the girl had touched upon one of his weak points; however, he remained silent. Alice continued—

"And now, sir, I hope you will let me come and sit outside the door every evening and hear you; I will make no noise—I will be so quiet."

"What! in that cold corridor, these bitter nights?"

"I am used to cold, sir. Father would not let me have a fire when he was not at home."

"No, Alice, but you shall come into the room while I play, and I will give you a lesson or two. I am glad you have so good an ear; it may be a means of your earning your own honest livelihood when you leave me."

"When I——; but I never intend to leave you, sir!" said Alice, beginning fearfully, and ending calmly.

Maltravers had recourse to the meerschaum.

Luckily, perhaps, at this time, they were joined by Mr Simcox, the old writing-master. Alice went in to prepare her books; but Maltravers laid his hand upon the preceptor's shoulder.

" You have a quick pupil, I hope, sir," said he.

" Oh, very, very, Mr Butler. She comes on famously. She practises a great deal when I am away, and I do my best."

" And," asked Maltravers, in a grave tone, " have you succeeded in instilling into the poor child's mind some of those more sacred notions of which I spoke to you in our first meeting ? "

" Why, sir, she was indeed quite a heathen--quite a Mohammedan, I may say ; but she is a little better now."

" What have you taught her ? "

" That God made her."

" That is a great step."

" And that he loves good girls, and will watch over them."

" Bravo ! You beat Plato."

" No, sir, I never beat any one, except little Jack Turner ; but he is a dunce."

" Bah ! What else do you teach her ? "

" That the devil runs away with bad girls, and——"

" Stop there, Mr Simcox. Never mind the devil yet awhile. Let her first learn to do good, that God may love her ; the rest will follow. I would rather make people religious through their best feelings than their worst—through their gratitude and affections, rather than their fears and calculations of risk and punishment."

Mr Simcox stared.

" Does she say her prayers ? "

"I have taught her a short one."

"Did she learn it readily?"

"Lord love her, yes! When I told her she ought to pray to God to bless her benefactor, she would not rest till I had repeated a prayer out of our Sunday-school book, and she got it by heart at once."

"Enough, Mr Simcox. I will not detain you longer."

Forgetful of his untasted breakfast, Maltravers continued his meerschaum and his reflections: he did not cease, till he had convinced himself that he was but doing his duty to Alice, by teaching her to cultivate the charming talent she evidently possessed, and through which she might secure her own independence. He fancied that he should thus relieve himself of a charge and responsibility which often perplexed him. Alice would leave him, enabled to walk the world in an honest professional path. It was an excellent idea. "But there is danger," whispered Conscience. "Ay," answered Philosophy and Pride, those wise dupes that are always so solemn, and always so taken in; "but what is virtue without trial?"

And now every evening, when the windows were closed, and the hearth burnt clear, while the winds stormed, and the rain beat without, a lithe and lovely shape hovered about the student's chamber; and his wild songs were sung by a voice which Nature had made even sweeter than his own.

Alice's talent for music was indeed surprising; enthusiastic and quick as he himself was in all he under-

took, Maltravers was amazed at her rapid progress. He soon taught her to play by ear ; and Maltravers could not but notice that her hand, always delicate in shape, had lost the rude colour and roughness of labour. He thought of that pretty hand more often than he ought to have done, and guided it over the keys when it could have found its way very well without him.

On coming to the cottage, he had directed the old servant to provide suitable and proper clothes for Alice ; but now that she was admitted “to sit with the gentleman,” the crone had the sense, without waiting for new orders, to buy the “pretty young woman” garments, still indeed simple, but of better materials, and less rustic fashion ; and Alice’s redundant tresses were now carefully arranged into orderly and glossy curls, and even the texture was no longer the same : and happiness and health bloomed on her downy cheeks, and smiled from the dewy lips, which never quite closed over the fresh white teeth, except when she was sad ;—but that seemed never, now she was not banished from Maltravers.

To say nothing of the unusual grace and delicacy of Alice’s form and features, there is nearly always something of Nature’s own gentility in very young women (except, indeed, when they get together and fall a-giggling) ; it shames us men to see how much sooner they are polished into conventional shape, than our rough, masculine angles. A vulgar boy requires, Heaven knows what assiduity, to move three steps—I do not say like a gentleman, but like a body that

has a soul in it ; but give the least advantage of society or tuition to a peasant girl, and a hundred to one but she will glide into refinement before the boy can make a bow without upsetting the table. There is sentiment in all women, and sentiment gives delicacy to thought, and tact to manner. But sentiment with men is generally acquired, an offspring of the intellectual quality, not, as with the other sex, of the moral.

In the course of his musical and vocal lessons, Maltravers gently took the occasion to correct poor Alice's frequent offences against grammar and accent ; and her memory was prodigiously quick and retentive. The very tones of her voice seemed altered in the ear of Maltravers ; and, somehow or other, the time came when he was no longer sensible of the difference in their rank.

The old woman-servant, when she had seen how it would be from the first, and taken a pride in her own prophecy, as she ordered Alice's new dresses, was a much better philosopher than Maltravers, though he was already up to his ears in the moonlit abyss of Plato, and had filled a dozen commonplace books with criticisms on Kant.

CHAPTER VI.

Young man, I fear thy blood is rosy red,
Thy heart is soft.

D'AGUILAR'S *Fiesco*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

As education does not consist in reading and writing only, so Alice, while still very backward in those elementary arts, forestalled some of their maturest results in her intercourse with Maltravers. Before the inoculation took effect, she caught knowledge in the natural way. For the refinement of a graceful mind and a happy manner is very contagious. And Maltravers was encouraged by her quickness in music to attempt such instruction in other studies as conversation could afford. It is a better school than parents and masters think for: there was a time when all information was given orally; and probably the Athenians learned more from hearing Aristotle than we do from reading him. It was a delicious revival of Academe—in the walks, or beneath the rustic porticoes of that little cottage—the romantic philosopher and the beautiful disciple! And his talk was much like that of a sage of the early world, with some wistful and earnest savage for a listener: of the stars and their courses—of beasts, and birds, and fishes, and plants, and flowers—the

wide family of Nature—of the beneficence and power of God—of the mystic and spiritual history of Man.

Charmed by her attention and docility, Maltravers at length diverged from lore into poetry ; he would repeat to her the simplest and most natural passages he could remember in his favourite poets ; he would himself compose verses elaborately adapted to her understanding ; she liked the last the best, and learned them the easiest. Never had young poet a more gracious inspiration, and never did this inharmonious world more complacently resolve itself into soft dreams, as if to humour the novitiate of the victims it must speedily take into its joyless priesthood. And Alice had now quietly and insensibly carved out her own avocations—the tenor of her service. The plants in the conservatory had passed under her care, and no one else was privileged to touch Maltravers's books, or arrange the sacred litter of a student's apartment. When he came down in the morning, or returned from his walks, everything was in order, yet by a kind of magic, just as he wished it ; the flowers he loved best bloomed, fresh-gathered, on his table ; the very position of the large chair, just in that corner by the fireplace, whence on entering the room its hospitable arms opened with the most cordial air of welcome, bespoke the presiding genius of a woman ; and then, precisely as the clock struck eight, Alice entered, so pretty and smiling, and happy-looking, that it was no wonder the single hour at first allotted to her extended into three.

Was Alice in love with Maltravers ?—She certainly

did not exhibit the symptoms in the ordinary way ; she did not grow more reserved, and agitated, and timid — there was no worm in the bud of her damask cheek ; nay, though from the first she had been tolerably bold, she was more free and confidential, more at her ease every day. In fact, she never for a moment suspected that she ought to be otherwise ; she had not the conventional and sensitive delicacy of girls, who, whatever their rank of life, have been taught that there is a mystery and a peril in love ; she had a vague idea about girls going wrong, but she did not know that love had anything to do with it ; on the contrary, according to her father, it had connection with money, not love ; all that she felt was so natural, and so very sinless. Could she help being so delighted to listen to him, and so grieved to depart ? What thus she felt she expressed, no less simply and no less guilelessly : and the candour sometimes completely blinded and misled him. No, she could not be in love, or she could not so frankly own that she loved him—it was a sisterly and grateful sentiment.

“The dear girl—I am rejoiced to think so,” said Maltravers to himself ; “I knew there would be no danger.”

Was he not in love himself? — The reader must decide.

“Alice,” said Maltravers, one evening, after a long pause of thought and abstraction on his side, while she was unconsciously practising her last lesson on the piano—“Alice—no, don’t turn round ; sit where you

are, but listen to me. We cannot live always in this way."

Alice was instantly disobedient—she did turn round, and those great blue eyes were fixed on his own with such anxiety and alarm, that he had no resource but to get up and look round for the meerschaum. But Alice, who divined by an instinct his lightest wish, brought it to him, while he was yet hunting, amidst the farther corners of the room, in places where it was certain not to be. There it was, already filled with the fragrant Salonica, glittering with the gilt pastile, which, not too healthfully, adulterates the seductive weed with odours that pacify the repugnant censure of the fastidious—for Maltravers was an Epicurean even in his worst habits;—there it was, I say, in that pretty hand which he had to touch as he took it; and while he lit the weed, he had again to blush and shrink beneath those great blue eyes.

"Thank you, Alice," he said; "thank you. Do sit down—there—out of the draught. I am going to open the window, the night is so lovely."

He opened the casement, overgrown with creepers, and the moonlight lay fair and breathless upon the smooth lawn. The calm and holiness of the night soothed and elevated his thoughts; he had cut himself off from the eyes of Alice, and he proceeded with a firm, though gentle voice:—

"My dear Alice, we cannot always live together in this way; you are now wise enough to understand me, so listen patiently. A young woman never wants a

fortune, so long as she has a good character ; she is always poor and despised without one. Now, a good character in this world is lost as much by imprudence as guilt ; and if you were to live with me much longer, it would be imprudent, and your character would suffer so much that you would not be able to make your own way in the world ; far, then, from doing you a service, I should have done you a deadly injury, which I could not atone for : besides, Heaven knows what may happen worse than imprudence ; for I am very sorry to say," added Maltravers, with great gravity, " that you are much too pretty and engaging to—to—in short, it won't do. I must go home ; my friends will have a right to complain of me, if I remain thus lost to them many weeks longer. And you, my dear Alice, are now sufficiently advanced to receive better instruction than I or Mr Simcox can give you. I therefore propose to place you in some respectable family, where you will have more comfort and a higher station than you have here. You can finish your education, and, instead of being taught, you will be thus enabled to become a teacher to others. With your beauty, Alice" (and Maltravers sighed), "and natural talents, and amiable temper, you have only to act well and prudently, to secure at last a worthy husband and a happy home. Have you heard me, Alice ? Such is the plan I have formed for you."

The young man thought as he spoke, with honest kindness and upright honour ; it was a bitterer sacrifice than perhaps the reader thinks for. But Maltravers,

if he had an impassioned, had not a selfish heart ; and he felt, to use his own expression, more emphatic than eloquent, that “ it would not do” to live any longer alone with this beautiful girl, like the two children whom the good Fairy kept safe from sin and the world in the Pavilion of Roses.

But Alice comprehended neither the danger to herself, nor the temptations that Maltravers, if he could not resist, desired to shun. She rose, pale and trembling, approached Maltravers, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

“ I will go away, when and where you wish — the sooner the better — to-morrow — yes, to-morrow ; you are ashamed of poor Alice ; and it has been very silly of me to be so happy.” (She struggled with her emotion for a moment, and went on.) “ You know Heaven can hear me, even when I am away from you, and when I know more I can pray better ; and Heaven will bless you, sir, and make you happy, for I never can pray for anything else.”

With these words she turned away, and walked proudly towards the door. But when she reached the threshold, she stopped and looked round, as if to take a last farewell. All the associations and memories of that beloved spot rushed upon her—she gasped for breath—tottered—and fell to the ground insensible.

Maltravers was already by her side ; he lifted her light weight in his arms ; he uttered wild and impassioned exclamations — “ Alice, beloved Alice — forgive

me ; we will never part ! ” He chafed her hands in his own while her head lay on his bosom, and he kissed again and again those beautiful eyelids, till they opened slowly upon him, and the tender arms tightened round him involuntarily.

“ Alice,” he whispered—“ Alice, dear Alice, I love thee.” Alas ! it was true : he loved—and forgot all but that love. He was eighteen.

CHAPTER VII.

How like a younker or a prodigal,
The scarf'd bark puts from her native bay !
Merchant of Venice.

WE are apt to connect the voice of Conscience with the stillness of midnight. But I think we wrong that innocent hour. It is that terrible "NEXT MORNING," when reason is wide awake, upon which remorse fastens its fangs. Has a man gambled away his all, or shot his friend in a duel—has he committed a crime, or incurred a laugh?—it is the *next morning*, when the irretrievable Past rises before him like a spectre; then doth the churchyard of memory yield up its grisly dead—then is the witching hour when the foul fiend within us can least tempt perhaps, but most torment. At night we have one thing to hope for, one refuge to fly to—oblivion and sleep! But at morning, sleep is over, and we are called upon coldly to review, and re-act, and live again the waking bitterness of self-reproach. Maltravers rose a penitent and unhappy man; remorse was new to him, and he felt as if he had committed a treacherous and fraudulent as well as guilty deed. This poor girl, she was so innocent, so confiding, so

unprotected, even by her own sense of right. He went down-stairs listless and dispirited. He longed yet dreaded to encounter Alice. He heard her step in the conservatory—paused, irresolute, and at length joined her. For the first time she blushed and trembled, and her eyes shunned his. But when he kissed her hand in silence, she whispered, “And am I now to leave you?” And Maltravers answered fervently, “Never!” and then her face grew so radiant with joy that Maltravers was comforted despite himself. Alice knew no remorse, though she felt agitated and ashamed ; as she had not comprehended the danger, neither was she aware of the fall. In fact, she never thought of herself. Her whole soul was with him ; she gave him back in love the spirit she had caught from him in knowledge.

And they strolled together through the garden all that day, and Maltravers grew reconciled to himself. He had done wrong, it is true ; but then perhaps Alice had already suffered as much as she could in the world’s opinion by living with him alone, though innocent so long. And now she had an everlasting claim to his protection—she should never know shame or want. And the love that had led to the wrong, should, by fidelity and devotion, take from it the character of sin.

Natural and commonplace sophistries ! *L’homme se pique !* as old Montaigne said ; Man is his own sharper ! The conscience is the most elastic material in the world. To-day you cannot stretch it over a mole-hill, to-morrow it hides a mountain.

Oh how happy they were now—that young pair ! How the days flew like dreams ! Time went on, winter passed away, and the early spring, with its flowers and sunshine, was like a mirror to their own youth. Alice never accompanied Maltravers in his walks abroad, partly because she feared to meet her father, and partly because Maltravers himself was fastidiously averse to all publicity. But then they had all that little world of three acres—lawn and fountain, shrubbery and terrace—to themselves, and Alice never asked if there was any other world without. She was now quite a scholar, as Mr Simecox himself averred. She could read aloud and fluently to Maltravers, and copied out his poetry in a small, fluctuating hand, and he had no longer to chase throughout his vocabulary for short Saxon monosyllables to make the bridge of intercourse between their ideas. Eros and Psyche are ever united, and Love opens all the petals of the soul. On one subject alone, Maltravers was less eloquent than of yore. He had not succeeded as a moralist, and he thought it hypocritical to preach what he did not practise. But Alice was gentler and purer, and, as far as she knew, sweet fool ! better than ever—she had invented a new prayer for herself ; and she prayed as regularly and as fervently as if she were doing nothing amiss. But the code of heaven is gentler than that of earth, and does not declare that ignorance excuseth not the crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

Some clouds sweep on as vultures for their prey.

No azure more shall robe the firmament,
Nor spangled stars be glorious.

BYRON, *Heaven and Earth*.

It was a lovely evening in April ; the weather was unusually mild and serene for the time of the year in the northern districts of our isle, and the bright drops of a recent shower sparkled upon the buds of the lilac and laburnum that clustered round the cottage of Maltravers. The little fountain that played in the centre of a circular basin, on whose clear surface the broad-leaved water-lily cast its fairy shadow, added to the fresh green of the lawn ;—

“ And softè as velvèt the yongè grass,”

on which the rare and early flowers were closing their heavy lids. That twilight shower had given a racy and vigorous sweetness to the air which stole over many a bank of violets, and slightly stirred the golden ringlets of Alice as she sat by the side of her entranced and silent lover.—They were seated on a rustic bench just without the cottage, and the open windows be-

hind them admitted the view of that happy room—with its litter of books and musical instruments—eloquent of the POETRY of HOME.

Maltravers was silent, for his flexible and excitable fancy was conjuring up a thousand shapes along that transparent air, or upon those shadowy violet banks. He was not thinking, he was imagining. His genius reposed dreamily upon the calm but exquisite sense of his happiness. Alice was not absolutely in his thoughts, but unconsciously she coloured them all ; if she had left his side, the whole charm would have been broken. But Alice, who was not a poet or a genius, *was* thinking, and thinking only of Maltravers. . . . His image was “the broken mirror” multiplied in a thousand faithful fragments over everything fair and soft in that lovely microcosm before her. But they were both alike in one thing—they were not with the Future, they were sensible of the Present; the sense of the actual life, the enjoyment of the breathing time, was strong within them. Such is the privilege of the extremes of our existence—Youth and Age. Middle life is never with to-day, its home is in to-morrow anxious, and scheming, and desiring, and wishing this plot ripened and that hope fulfilled, while every wave of the forgotten Time brings it nearer and nearer to the end of all things. Half our life is consumed in longing to be nearer death.

“Alice,” said Maltravers, waking at last from his reverie, and drawing that light, childlike form nearer to him, “you enjoy this hour as much as I do.”

“Oh, much more !”

“More ! and why so ?”

“Because I am thinking of you, and perhaps you are not thinking of yourself.”

Maltravers smiled and stroked those beautiful ringlets, and kissed that smooth, innocent forehead, and Alice nestled herself in his breast.

“How young you look by this light, Alice !” said he, tenderly looking down.

“Would you love me less if I were old ?” asked Alice.

“I suppose I should never have loved you in the same way, if you had been old when I first saw you.”

“Yet I am sure I should have felt the same for you if you had been—oh, ever so old !”

“What ! with wrinkled cheeks, and palsied head, and a brown wig, and no teeth, like Mr Simcox ?”

“Oh, but you could never be like that ! You would always look young—your heart would be always in your face. That dear smile—ah, you would look beautiful to the last !”

“But Simcox, though not very lovely now, has been, I daresay, handsomer than I am, Alice ; and I shall be contented to look as well when I am as old !”

“I should never know you were old, because I can see you just as I please. Sometimes, when you are thoughtful, your brows meet, and you look so stern that I tremble ; but then I think of you when you last smiled, and look up again, and though you are frowning still, you seem to smile. I am sure you are different

to other eyes than to mine, . . . and time must kill me before, in my sight, it could alter *you*."

"Sweet Alice, you talk eloquently, for you talk love."

"My heart talks to you. Ah ! I wish it could say all it felt. I wish it could make poetry like you, or that words were music—I would never speak to you in anything else. I was so delighted to learn music, because when I played I seemed to be talking to you. I am sure that whoever invented music did it because he loved dearly and wanted to say so. I said '*he*,' but I think it was a woman. Was it ?"

"The Greeks I told you of, and whose life was music, thought it was a god."

"Ah, but you say the Greeks made Love a god. Were they wicked for it ?"

"Our own God above is Love," said Ernest, seriously, "as our own poets have said and sung. But it is a love of another nature—divine, not human. Come, we will go within ; the air grows cold for you."

They entered, his arm round her waist. The room smiled upon them its quiet welcome ; and Alice, whose heart had not half vented its fulness, sat down to the instrument still to "talk love" in her own way.

But it was Saturday evening. Now every Saturday Maltravers received from the neighbouring town the provincial newspaper—it was his only medium of communication with the great world. But it was not for that communication that he always seized it with avidity, and fed on it with interest. The county in which

his father resided bordered on the shire in which Ernest sojourned, and the paper included the news of that familiar district in its comprehensive columns. It therefore satisfied Ernest's conscience and soothed his filial anxieties to read from time to time that "Mr Maltravers was entertaining a distinguished party of friends at his noble mansion of Lisle Court ;" or that "Mr Maltravers's foxhounds had met on such a day at something copse ;" or that "Mr Maltravers, with his usual munificence, had subscribed twenty guineas to the new county jail." . . . And as now Maltravers saw the expected paper laid beside the hissing urn, he seized it eagerly, tore the envelope, and hastened to the well-known corner appropriated to the paternal district. The very first words that struck his eyes were these :—

"ALARMING ILLNESS OF MR MALTRAVERS.

"We regret to state that this exemplary and distinguished gentleman was suddenly seized on Wednesday night with a severe spasmodic affection. Dr —— was immediately sent for, who pronounced it to be gout in the stomach : the first medical assistance from London has been summoned.

*"Postscript.—*We have just learned, in answer to our inquiries at Lisle Court, that the respected owner is considerably worse : but slight hopes are entertained of his recovery. Captain Maltravers, his eldest son and heir, is at Lisle Court. An express has been despatched in search of Mr Ernest Maltravers, who, involved by

his high English spirit in some dispute with the authorities of a despotic government, had suddenly disappeared from Gottingen, where his extraordinary talents had highly distinguished him. He is supposed to be staying at Paris."

The paper dropped on the floor. Ernest threw himself back on the chair, and covered his face with his hands.

Alice was beside him in a moment. He looked up, and caught her wistful and terrified gaze. "Oh, Alice!" he cried, bitterly, and almost pushing her away, "if you could but guess my remorse!" Then springing on his feet, he hurried from the room.

Presently the whole house was in commotion. The gardener, who was always in the house about supper-time, flew to the town for post-horses. The old woman was in despair about the laundress, for her first and only thought was for "master's shirts." Ernest locked himself in his room. Alice! poor Alice!

In little more than twenty minutes the chaise was at the door; and Ernest, pale as death, came into the room where he had left Alice.

She was seated on the floor, and the fatal paper was on her lap. She had been endeavouring, in vain, to learn what had so sensibly affected Maltravers, for, as I said before, she was unacquainted with his real name, and therefore the ominous paragraph did not even arrest her eye.

He took the paper from her, for he wanted again

and again to read it : some little word of hope or encouragement must have escaped him. And then Alice flung herself on his breast. "Do not weep," said he ; "Heaven knows I have sorrow enough of my own ! My father is dying ! So kind, so generous, so indulgent ! O God, forgive me ! Compose yourself, Alice. You will hear from me in a day or two."

He kissed her ; but the kiss was cold and forced. He hurried away. She heard the wheels grate on the pebbles. She rushed to the window ; but that beloved face was not visible. Maltravers had drawn the blinds, and thrown himself back to indulge his grief. A moment more, and even the vehicle that bore him away was gone. And before her were the flowers, and the starlit lawn, and the playful fountain, and the bench where they had sat in such heartfelt and serene delight. He was gone ; and often—oh, how often !—did Alice remember that his last words had been uttered in estranged tones—that his last embrace had been without love !

CHAPTER IX.

Thy due from me
Is tears : and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness,
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously!

Second Part of Henry IV., Act iv. Sc. 4.

IT was late at night when the chaise that bore Maltravers stopped at the gates of a park lodge. It seemed an age before the peasant within was aroused from the deep sleep of labour-loving health. “My father,” he cried, while the gate creaked on its hinges ; “my father—is he better ? Is he alive ?”

“Oh, bless your heart, Master Ernest, the squire was a little better this evening.”

“Thank heaven ! On—on !”

The horses smoked and galloped along a road that wound through venerable and ancient groves. The moonlight slept soft upon the sward, and the cattle, disturbed from their sleep, rose lazily up, and gazed upon the unseasonable intruder.

It is a wild and weird scene,—one of those noble English parks at midnight, with its rough forest-ground broken into dell and valley, its never-innovated and mossy grass, overrun with fern, and its immemorial

trees, that have looked upon the birth, and look yet upon the graves, of a hundred generations. Such spots are the last proud and melancholy trace of Norman knighthood and old romance, left to the laughing landscapes of cultivated England. They always throw something of shadow and solemn gloom upon minds that feel their associations, like that which belongs to some ancient and holy edifice. They are the cathedral aisles of Nature, with their darkened vistas, and columned trunks, and arches of mighty foliage. But in ordinary times the gloom is pleasing, and more delightful than all the cheerful lawns and sunny slopes of the modern taste. *Now* to Maltravers it was ominous and oppressive: the darkness of death seemed brooding in every shadow, and its warning voice moaning in every breeze.

The wheels stopped again. Lights flitted across the basement storey; and one above, more dim than the rest, shone palely from the room in which the sick man slept. The bell rang shrilly out from amidst the dark ivy that clung around the porch. The heavy door swung back—Maltravers was on the threshold. His father lived—was better—was awake. The son was in the father's arms.

CHAPTER X.

The guardian oak
Mourned o'er the roof it sheltered : the thick air
Laboured with doleful sounds.

ELLIOTT of Sheffield.

MANY days had passed, and Alice was still alone ; but she had heard twice from Maltravers. The letters were short and hurried. One time his father was better, and there were hopes ; another time, and it was not expected that he could survive the week. They were the first letters Alice had ever received from him. Those *first* letters are an event in a girl's life—in Alice's life they were a very melancholy one. Ernest did not ask her to write to him ; in fact, he felt, at such an hour, a repugnance to disclose his real name, and receive the letters of clandestine love in the house in which a father lay in death. He might have given the feigned address he had previously assumed at some distant post-town, where his person was not known. But, then, to obtain such letters, he must quit his father's side for hours. The thing was impossible. These difficulties Maltravers did not explain to Alice.

She thought it singular he did not wish to hear from her ; but Alice was humble. What could she

say worth troubling him with, and at such an hour ? But how kind in him to write ! how precious those letters ! and yet they disappointed her, and cost her floods of tears : they were so short—so full of sorrow —there was so little love in them ; and “dear,” or even “*dearest Alice*,” that uttered by the voice was so tender, looked cold upon the lifeless paper. If she but knew the exact spot where he was, it would be some comfort ; but she only knew that he was away, and in grief ; and though he was little more than thirty miles distant, she felt as if immeasurable space divided them. However, she consoled herself as she could, and strove to shorten the long miserable day by playing over all the airs he liked, and reading all the passages he had commended. She should be so improved when he returned ; and how lovely the garden would look ! for every day its trees and bosquets caught a new smile from the deepening spring. Oh, they would be so happy once more ! Alice *now* learned the life that lies in the future ; and her young heart had not as yet been taught that of that future there is any prophet but Hope !

Maltravers, on quitting the cottage, had forgotten that Alice was without money, and now that he found his stay would be indefinitely prolonged, he sent a remittance. Several bills were unpaid—some portion of the rent was due ; and Alice, as she was desired, intrusted the old servant with a bank-note, with which she was to discharge these petty debts. One evening, as she brought Alice the surplus, the good dame seemed

greatly discomposed. She was pale and agitated ; or, as she expressed it, "had a terrible fit of the shakes."

"What is the matter, Mrs Jones? you have no news of him—of—of my—of your master?"

"Dear heart, miss—no," answered Mrs Jones; "how should I? But I'm sure I don't wish to frighten you; there has been two sitch robberies in the neighbourhood!"

"Oh, thank Heaven, that's all!" exclaimed Alice.

"Oh, don't go for to thank Heaven for that, miss; it's a shocking thing for two lone females like us, and them ere windows all open to the ground! You sees, as I was taking the note to be changed at Mr Harris's, the great grocer's shop, where all the poor folk was a-buying agin to-morrow" (for it was Saturday night, the second Saturday after Ernest's departure; from that hegira Alice dated all her chronology), "and everybody was a-talking about the robberies last night. La, miss, they bound old Betty—you know Betty—a most respectable 'oman, who has known sorrows, and drinks tea with me once a-week. Well, miss, they (only think!) bound Betty to the bedpost, with nothing on her but her shift—poor old soul! And as Mr Harris gave me the change (please to see, miss, it's all right), and I asked for half gould, miss, it's more convenient, sitch an ill-looking fellow was by me, a-buying o'baccy, and he did so stare at the money, that I vows I thought he'd have rin away with it from the counter: so I grabbed it up and went away. But, would you

believe, miss, just as I got into the lane, afore you turns through the gate, I chanced to look back, and there, sure enough, was that ugly fellow close behind, a-running like mad. Oh, I set up such a skreetch ; and young Dobbins was a-taking his cow out of the field, and he perked up over the hedge when he heard me ; and the cow, too, with her horns, Lord bless her ! So the fellow stopped, and I bustled through the gate, and got home. But la, miss, if we are all robbed and murdered ? ”

Alice had not heard much of this harangue ; but what she did hear very slightly affected her strong peasant-born nerves ; not half so much, indeed, as the noise Mrs Jones made in double-locking all the doors, and barring, as well as a peg and a rusty inch of chain would allow, all the windows—which operation occupied at least an hour and a half.

All at last was still. Mrs Jones had gone to bed—in the arms of sleep she had forgotten her terrors—and Alice had crept upstairs, and undressed, and said her prayers, and wept a little : and, with the tears yet moist upon her dark eyelashes, had glided into dreams of Ernest. Midnight was past—the stroke of one sounded unheard from the clock at the foot of the stairs. The moon was gone—a slow, drizzling rain was falling upon the flowers, and cloud and darkness gathered fast and thick around the sky.

About this time, a low, regular, grating sound commenced at the thin shutters of the sitting-room below, preceded by a very faint noise, like the tinkling of

small fragments of glass on the gravel without. At length it ceased, and the cautious and partial gleam of a lantern fell along the floor; another moment, and two men stood in the room.

"Hush, Jack!" whispered one; "hang out the glim, and let's look about us."

The dark-lantern, now fairly unmuffled, presented to the gaze of the robbers nothing that could gratify their cupidity. Books and music, chairs, tables, carpet, and fire-irons, though valuable enough in a house-agent's inventory, are worthless to the eyes of a house-breaker. They muttered a mutual curse.

"Jack," said the former speaker, "we must make a dash at the spoons and forks, and then hey for the money. The old girl had thirty shinners, besides flimsies."

The accomplice nodded consent; the lantern was again partially shaded, and with noiseless and stealthy steps the men quitted the apartment. Several minutes elapsed, when Alice was awakened from her slumber by a loud scream: she started, all was again silent: she must have dreamt it: her little heart beat violently at first, but gradually regained its tenor. She rose, however, and the kindness of her nature being more susceptible than her fear, she imagined Mrs Jones might be ill—she would go to her. With this idea she began partially dressing herself, when she distinctly heard heavy footsteps and a strange voice in the room beyond. She was now thoroughly alarmed—her first impulse was to escape from the house—her

next to bolt the door, and call aloud for assistance. But who would hear her cries? Between the two purposes, she halted irresolute and remained, pale and trembling, seated at the foot of the bed, when a broad light streamed through the chinks of the door—an instant more, and a rude hand seized her.

"Come, mem; don't be fritted, we won't harm you; but where's the gold-dust—where's the money?—the old girl says you've got it. Fork it over."

"Oh, mercy, mercy! John Walters, is that you?"

"Damnation!" muttered the man, staggering back; "so you knows me, then: but you shan't peach; you shan't serag me, b—t you."

While he spoke, he again seized Alice, held her forcibly down with one hand, while with the other he deliberately drew from a side-pouch a long case-knife. In that moment of deadly peril, the second ruffian, who had been hitherto delayed in securing the servant, rushed forward. He had heard the exclamation of Alice, he heard the threat of his comrade; he darted to the bedside, cast a hurried gaze upon Alice, and hurled the intended murderer to the other side of the room.

"What, man! art mad?" he growled between his teeth. "Don't you know her? It is Alice;—it is my daughter."

Alice had sprung up when released from the murderer's knife, and now, with eyes strained and starting with horror, gazed upon the dark and evil face of her deliverer.

"O God, it is—it is my father!" she muttered, and fell senseless.

"Daughter or no daughter," said John Walters, "I shall not put my scrag in her power; recollect how she fritted us before, when she run away."

Darvil stood thoughtful and perplexed—and his associate approached doggedly, with a look of such settled ferocity as it was impossible for even Darvil to contemplate without a shudder.

"You say right," muttered the father, after a pause; but fixing his strong gripe on his comrade's shoulder,—“the girl must not be left here—the cart has a covering. We are leaving the country; I have a right to my daughter—she shall go with us. There, man, grab the money—it's on the table; . . . you've got the spoons. Now then.” As Darvil spoke he seized his daughter in his arms; threw over her a shawl and a cloak that lay at hand, and was already on the threshold.

"I don't half like it," said Walters, grumblyingly—"it been't safe."

"At least it is as safe as murder!" answered Darvil, turning round with a ghastly grin. "Make haste."

When Alice recovered her senses, the dawn was breaking slowly along desolate and sullen hills. She was lying upon rough straw—the cart was jolting over the ruts of a precipitous, lonely road,—and by her side scowled the face of that dreadful father.

CHAPTER XI.

Yet he beholds her with the eyes of mind—
He sees the form which he no more shall meet—
She like a passionate thought is come and gone,
While at his feet the bright rill bubbles on.

ELLIOTT of *Sheffield*.

IT was a little more than three weeks after that fearful night, when the chaise of Maltravers stopped at the cottage door—the windows were shut up; no one answered the repeated summons of the postboy. Maltravers himself, alarmed and amazed, descended from the vehicle: he was in deep mourning. He went impatiently to the back entrance; that also was locked; round to the French windows of the drawing-room, always hitherto half-opened, even in the frosty days of winter—they were now closed like the rest. He shouted in terror, “Alice, Alice!”—no sweet voice answered in breathless joy, no fairy step bounded forward in welcome. At this moment, however, appeared the form of the gardener, coming across the lawn. The tale was soon told; the house had been robbed—the old woman at morning found gagged and fastened to her bedpost—Alice flown. A magistrate had been applied to,—suspicion fell upon the fugitive. None

knew anything of her origin or name, not even the old woman. Maltravers had naturally and sedulously ordained Alice to preserve that secret, and she was too much in fear of being detected and claimed by her father, not to obey the injunction with scrupulous caution. But it was known, at least, that she had entered the house a poor peasant-girl ; and what more common than for ladies of a certain description to run away from their lover, and take some of his property by mistake ? And a poor girl like Alice, what else could be expected ? The magistrate smiled, and the constables laughed. After all, it was a good joke at the young gentleman's expense ! Perhaps, as they had no orders from Maltravers, and they did not know where to find him, and thought he would be little inclined to prosecute, the search was not very rigorous. But two houses had been robbed the night before. Their owners were more on the alert. Suspicion fell upon a man of infamous character, John Walters ; he had disappeared from the place. He had been last seen with an idle, drunken fellow, who was said to have known better days, and who at one time had been a skilful and well-paid mechanic, till his habits of theft and drunkenness threw him out of employ ; and he had been since accused of connection with a gang of coiners—tried—and escaped from want of sufficient evidence against him. That man was Luke Darvil. His cottage was searched ; but he also had fled. The trace of cart-wheels by the gate of Maltravers gave a faint clue to pursuit ; and after an active search of

some days, persons answering to the description of the suspected burglars—with a young female in their company—were tracked to a small inn, notorious as a resort for smugglers, by the sea-coast. But there every vestige of their supposed whereabouts disappeared.

And all this was told to the stunned Maltravers ; the garrulity of the gardener precluded the necessity of his own inquiries, and the name of Darvil explained to him all that was dark to others. And Alice was suspected of the basest and the blackest guilt ! Obscure, beloved, protected as she had been, she could not escape the calumny from which he had hoped everlastingly to shield her. But did *he* share that hateful thought ? Maltravers was too generous and too enlightened.

“Dog !” said he, grinding his teeth and clenching his hands at the startled menial, “dare to utter a syllable of suspicion against her, and I will trample the breath out of your body !”

The old woman, who had vowed that for the ‘varsal world she would not stay in the house after such a “night of shakes,” had now learned the news of her master’s return, and came hobbling up to him. She arrived in time to hear his menace to her fellow-servant.

“Ah, that’s right ; give it him, your honour, bless your good heart—that’s what I says. Miss rob the house ! says I—Miss run away ! O no—depend on it they have murdered her, and buried the body.”

Maltravers gasped for breath, but without uttering

another word he re-entered the chaise and drove to the house of the magistrate. He found that functionary a worthy and intelligent man of the world. To him he confided the secret of Alice's birth and his own. The magistrate concurred with him in believing that Alice had been discovered and removed by her father. New search was made—gold was lavished. Maltravers himself headed the search in person. But all came to the same result as before, save that by the descriptions he heard of the person, the dress, the tears, of the young female who had accompanied the men supposed to be Darvil and Walters, he was satisfied that Alice yet lived ; he hoped she might yet escape and return. In that hope he lingered for weeks—for months, in the neighbourhood ; but time passed, and no tidings. . . . He was forced at length to quit a neighbourhood at once so saddened and endeared. But he secured a friend in the magistrate, who promised to communicate with him if Alice returned, or her father was discovered. He enriched Mrs Jones for life, in gratitude for her vindication of his lost and early love ; he promised the amplest rewards for the smallest clue. And with a crushed and desponding spirit, he obeyed at last the repeated and anxious summons of the guardian to whose care, until his majority was attained, the young orphan was now intrusted.

CHAPTER XII.

Sure there are poets that did never dream
Upon Parnassus.—DENHAM.

Walk sober off, before a sprightlier age
Come tittering on, and shove you from the stage.—POPE.

Hence to repose your trust in me was wise.

DRYDEN's *Absalom and Achitophel*.

MR FREDERICK CLEVELAND, a younger son of the Earl of Byrneham, and therefore entitled to the style and distinction of “ Honourable,” was the guardian of Ernest Maltravers. He was now about the age of forty-three ; a man of letters and a man of fashion, if the last half-obsolete expression be permitted to us, as being at least more classical and definite than any other which modern euphuism has invented to convey the same meaning. Highly educated, and with natural abilities considerably above mediocrity, Mr Cleveland early in life had glowed with the ambition of an author. He had written well and gracefully ; but his success, though respectable, did not satisfy his aspirations. The fact is, that a new school of literature ruled the public, despite the critics—a school very different from that in which Mr Cleveland had formed his unimpassioned and polished periods. And as that old earl, who, in the time of

Charles I., was the reigning wit of the court, in the time of Charles II. was considered too dull even for a butt, so every age has its own literary stamp and coinage, and consigns the old circulation to its shelves and cabinets, as neglected curiosities. Cleveland could not become the fashion with the public as an author, though the coteries cried him up and the reviewers adored him—and the ladies of quality and the amateur dilettanti bought and bound his volumes of careful poetry and cadenced prose. But Cleveland had high birth and a handsome competence ; his manners were delightful, his conversation fluent, and his disposition was as amiable as his mind was cultured. He became, therefore, a man greatly sought after in society—both respected and beloved. If he had not genius, he had great good sense ;—he did not vex his urbane temper and kindly heart with walking after a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain. Satisfied with an honourable and unenvied reputation, he gave up the dream of that higher fame which he clearly saw was denied to his aspirations, and maintained his good-humour with the world, though in his secret soul he thought it was very wrong in its literary caprices. Cleveland never married : he lived partly in town, but principally at Temple Grove, a villa not far from Richmond. Here, with an excellent library, beautiful grounds, and a circle of attached and admiring friends, which comprised all the more refined and intellectual members of what is termed, by emphasis, *Good Society*—this accomplished and elegant person passed a life,

perhaps much happier than he would have known had his young visions been fulfilled, and it had become his stormy fate to lead the rebellious and fierce Democracy of Letters.

Cleveland was indeed, if not a man of high and original genius, at least very superior to the generality of patrician authors. In retiring, himself, from frequent exercise in the arena, he gave up his mind with renewed zest to the thoughts and masterpieces of others. From a well-read man he became a deeply-instructed one. Metaphysics, and some of the material sciences, added new treasures to information more light and miscellaneous, and contributed to impart weight and dignity to a mind that might otherwise have become somewhat effeminate and frivolous. His social habits, his clear sense, and benevolence of judgment, made him also an exquisite judge of all those indefinable nothings or little things, that, formed into a total, become knowledge of the great world. I say the Great World—for of the world without the circle of the great, Cleveland naturally knew but little. But of all that related to that subtle orbit in which gentlemen and ladies move in elevated and ethereal order, Cleveland was a profound philosopher. It was the mode with many of his admirers to style him the Horace Walpole of the day. But though in some of the more external and superficial points of character they were alike, Cleveland had considerably less cleverness, and infinitely more heart.

The late Mr Maltravers, a man not, indeed, of liter-

ary habits, but an admirer of those who were—an elegant, high-bred, hospitable *seigneur de province*—had been one of the earliest of Cleveland's friends ; Cleveland had been his fag at Eton, and he found Hal Maltravers (Handsome Hal !) had become the darling of the clubs, when he made his own *début* in society. They were inseparable for a season or two ; and when Mr Maltravers married, and, enamoured of country pursuits, proud of his old hall, and sensibly enough conceiving that he was a greater man in his own broad lands than in the republican aristocracy of London, settled peaceably at Lisle Court, Cleveland corresponded with him regularly, and visited him twice a-year. Mrs Maltravers died in giving birth to Ernest, her second son. Her husband loved her tenderly, and was long inconsolable for her loss. He could not bear the sight of the child that had cost him so dear a sacrifice. Cleveland and his sister, Lady Julia Danvers, were residing with him at the time of this melancholy event ; and with judicious and delicate kindness, Lady Julia proposed to place the unconscious offender amongst her own children for some months. The proposition was accepted, and it was two years before the infant Ernest was restored to the paternal mansion. During the greater part of that time he had gone through all the events and revolutions of baby life, under the bachelor roof of Frederick Cleveland. The result of this was, that the latter loved the child like a father. Ernest's first intelligible word hailed Cleveland as “papa ;” and when the urchin was at length

deposited at Lisle Court, Cleveland talked all the nurses out of breath with admonitions, and cautions, and injunctions, and promises, and threats, which might have put many a careful mother to the blush. This circumstance formed a new tie between Cleveland and his friend. Cleveland's visits were now three times a-year, instead of twice. Nothing was done for Ernest without Cleveland's advice. He was not even breeched till Cleveland gave his grave consent. Cleveland chose his school, and took him to it—and he spent a week of every vacation in Cleveland's house. The boy never got into a scrape, or won a prize, or wanted *a tip*, or coveted a book, but what Cleveland was the first to know of it. Fortunately, too, Ernest manifested by times tastes which the graceful author thought similar to his own. He early developed very remarkable talents, and a love for learning,—though these were accompanied with a vigour of life and soul—an energy—a daring—which gave Cleveland some uneasiness, and which did not appear to him at all congenial with the moody shyness of an embryo genius, or the regular placidity of a precocious scholar. Meanwhile the relation between father and son was rather a singular one. Mr Maltravers had overcome his first, not unnatural, repugnance to the innocent cause of his irremediable loss. He was now fond and proud of his boy—as he was of all things that belonged to him. He spoiled and petted him even more than Cleveland did. But he interfered very little with his education or pursuits. His eldest son, Cuthbert, did not engross all his heart,

but occupied all his care. With Cuthbert he connected the heritage of his ancient name, and the succession of his ancestral estates. Cuthbert was not a genius, nor intended to be one ; he was to be an accomplished gentleman, and a great proprietor. The father understood Cuthbert, and could see clearly both his character and career. He had no scruple in managing his education, and forming his growing mind. But Ernest puzzled him. Mr Maltravers was even a little embarrassed in the boy's society ; he never quite overcame that feeling of strangeness towards him which he had experienced when he first received him back from Cleveland, and took Cleveland's directions about his health and so forth. It always seemed to him as if his friend shared his right to the child ; and he thought it a sort of presumption to scold Ernest, though he very often swore at Cuthbert. As the younger son grew up, it certainly was evident that Cleveland did understand him better than his own father did ; and so, as I have before said, on Cleveland the father was not displeased passively to shift the responsibility of the rearing.

Perhaps Mr Maltravers might not have been so indifferent, had Ernest's prospects been those of a younger son in general. If a profession had been necessary for him, Mr Maltravers would have been naturally anxious to see him duly fitted for it. But from a maternal relation, Ernest inherited an estate of about four thousand pounds a-year ; and he was thus made independent of his father. This loosened another tie between them ; and so by degrees Mr Maltravers learned to

consider Ernest less as his own son, to be advised or rebuked, praised or controlled, than as a very affectionate, promising, engaging boy, who, somehow or other, without any trouble on his part, was very likely to do great credit to his family, and indulge his eccentricities upon four thousand pounds a-year. The first time that Mr Maltravers was seriously perplexed about him was when the boy, at the age of sixteen, having taught himself German, and intoxicated his wild fancies with ‘Werter,’ and ‘The Robbers,’ announced his desire, which sounded very like a demand, of going to Gottingen, instead of to Oxford. Never were Mr Maltravers’s notions of a proper and gentlemanlike finish to education more completely and rudely assaulted. He stammered out a negative, and hurried to his study to write a long letter to Cleveland, who, himself an Oxford prize-man, would, he was persuaded, see the matter in the same light. Cleveland answered the letter in person : listened in silence to all the father had to say, and then strolled through the park with the young man. The result of the latter conference was, that Cleveland declared in favour of Ernest.

“But, my dear Frederick,” said the astonished father, “I thought the boy was to carry off all the prizes at Oxford ?”

“I carried off some, Maltravers ; but I don’t see what good they did me.”

“O Cleveland !”

“I am serious.”

“But it is such a very odd fancy.”

"Your son is a very odd young man."

"I fear he is so—I fear he is, poor fellow! But what will he learn at Gottingen?"

"Languages and Independence," said Cleveland.

"And the classics—the classics—you are such an excellent Grecian!"

"There are great Grecians in Germany," answered Cleveland; "and Ernest cannot well unlearn what he knows already. My dear Maltravers, the boy is not like most clever young men. He must either go through action, and adventure, and excitement, in his own way, or he will be an idle dreamer or an impracticable enthusiast all his life. Let him alone.—So Cuthbert is gone into the Guards?"

"But he went first to Oxford."

"Humph! What a fine young man he is!"

"Not so tall as Ernest, but—"

"A handsomer face," said Cleveland. "He is a son to be proud of in one way, as I hope Ernest will be in another. Will you show me your new hunter?"

.
It was to the house of this gentleman, so judiciously made his guardian, that the student of Gottingen now took his melancholy way.

CHAPTER XIII.

But if a little exercise you choose,
Some zest for ease, 'tis not forbidden here;
Amid the groves you may indulge the Muse,
Or tend the blooms and deck the vernal year.

Castle of Indolence.

THE house of Mr Cleveland was an Italian villa adapted to an English climate. Through an Ionic arch you entered a domain of some eighty or a hundred acres in extent, but so well planted and so artfully disposed, that you could not have supposed the unseen boundaries enclosed no ampler a space. The road wound through the greenest sward, in which trees of venerable growth were relieved by a profusion of shrubs, and flowers gathered into baskets intertwined with creepers, or blooming from classic vases, placed with a tasteful care in such spots as required the *filling up*, and harmonised well with the object chosen. Not an old ivy-grown pollard, not a modest and bending willow, but was brought out, as it were, into a peculiar feature by the art of the owner. Without being overloaded, or too minutely elaborate (the common fault of the rich man's villa), the whole place seemed one diversified and cultivated garden ; even the air almost took

a different odour from different vegetation, with each winding of the road ; and the colours of the flowers and foliage varied with every view.

At length, when, on a lawn, sloping towards a glassy lake overhung by limes and chestnuts, and backed by a hanging wood, the house itself came in sight, the whole prospect seemed suddenly to receive its finishing and crowning feature. The house was long and low. A deep peristyle that supported the roof extended the whole length, and, being raised above the basement, had the appearance of a covered terrace ; broad flights of steps, with massive balustrades supporting vases of aloes and orange-trees, led to the lawn ; and under the peristyle were ranged statues, Roman antiquities, and rare exotics. On this side the lake another terrace, very broad, and adorned, at long intervals, with urns and sculpture, contrasted the shadowy and sloping bank beyond ; and commanded, through unexpected openings in the trees, extensive views of the distant landscape, with the stately Thames winding through the midst. The interior of the house corresponded with the taste without. All the principal rooms, even those appropriated to sleep, were on the same floor. A small but lofty and octagonal hall conducted to a suite of four rooms. At one extremity was a moderately-sized dining-room, with a ceiling copied from the rich and gay colours of Guido's ‘Hours ;’ and landscapes painted by Cleveland himself, with no despicable skill, were let into the walls. A single piece of sculpture, copied from the Piping Faun, and tinged with a fleshlike

glow by purple and orange draperies behind it, relieved without darkening the broad and arched window which formed its niche. This communicated with a small picture-room, not indeed rich with those immortal gems for which princes are candidates ; for Cleveland's fortune was but that of a private gentleman, though, managed with a discreet if liberal economy, it sufficed for all his elegant desires. But the pictures had an interest beyond that of art, and their subjects were within the reach of a collector of ordinary opulence. They made a series of portraits—some originals, some copies (and the copies were often the best)—of Cleveland's favourite authors. And it was characteristic of the man that Pope's worn and thoughtful countenance looked down from the central place of honour. Appropriately enough, this room led into the library, the largest room in the house—the only one, indeed, that was noticeable from its size as well as its embellishments. It was nearly sixty feet in length. The bookcases were crowned with bronze busts ; while at intervals, statues, placed in open arches, backed with mirrors, gave the appearance of galleries opening from the book-lined walls, and introduced an inconceivable air of classic lightness and repose into the apartment : with these arches the windows harmonised so well, opening on the peristyle, and bringing into delightful view the sculpture, the flowers, the terraces, and the lake without, that the actual prospects half seduced you into the belief that they were designs by some master-hand of the poetical gardens that yet crown the hills of Rome.

Even the colouring of the prospects on a sunny day favoured the delusion, owing to the deep, rich hues of the simple draperies, and the stained glass of which the upper panes of the windows were composed. Cleveland was especially fond of sculpture ; he was sensible, too, of the mighty impulse which that art has received in Europe within the last half-century. He was even capable of asserting the doctrine, not yet sufficiently acknowledged in this country, that Flaxman surpassed Canova. He loved sculpture, too, not only for its own beauty, but for the beautifying and intellectual effect that it produces wherever it is admitted. It is a great mistake, he was wont to say, in collectors of statues, to arrange them *pêle-mêle* in one long monotonous gallery. The single relief, or statue, or bust, or simple urn, introduced appropriately in the smallest apartment we inhabit, charms us infinitely more than those gigantic museums, crowded into rooms never entered but for show, and without a chill, uncomfortable shiver. Besides, this practice of galleries, which the herd consider orthodox, places sculpture out of the patronage of the public. There are not a dozen people who can afford galleries ; but every moderately affluent gentleman can afford a statue or a bust. The influence, too, upon a man's mind and taste, created by the constant and habitual view of monuments of the only imperishable art which resorts to physical materials, is unspeakable. Looking upon the Greek marble, we become acquainted, almost insensibly, with the character of the Greek life and literature. That Aris-

tides, that Genius of Death, that fragment of the unrivalled Psyche, are worth a thousand Scaligers !

“Do you ever look at the Latin translation when you read *Æschylus* ?” said a schoolboy once to Cleveland.

“That is my Latin translation,” said Cleveland, pointing to the *Laocoon*.

The library opened, at the extreme end, to a small cabinet for curiosities and medals, which, still in a straight line, conducted to a long belvidere, terminating in a little circular summerhouse that, by a sudden wind of the lake below, hung perpendicularly over its transparent tide, and, seen from the distance, appeared almost suspended on air, so light were its slender columns and arching dome. Another door from the library opened upon a corridor, which conducted to the principal sleeping-chambers ; the nearest door was that of Cleveland’s private study, communicating with his bedroom and dressing-closet. The other rooms were appropriated to, and named after, his several friends.

Mr Cleveland had been advised by a hasty line of the movements of his ward, and he received the young man with a smile of welcome, though his eyes were moist and his lips trembled—for the boy was like his father !—a new generation had commenced for Cleveland !

“Welcome, my dear Ernest,” said he ; “I am so glad to see you, that I will not scold you for your mysterious absence. This is your room, you see your name over the door ; it is a larger one than you used to have, for

you are a man now ; and there is your German sanctum adjoining—for Schiller and the meerschaum !—a bad habit, that, the meerschaum ! but not worse than the Schiller, perhaps ! You see you are in the peristyle immediately. The meerschaum is good for flowers, I fancy, so have no scruple. Why, my dear boy, how pale you are ! Be cheered—be cheered. Well, I must go myself, or you will infect me.”

Cleveland hurried away ; he thought of his lost friend. Ernest sank upon the first chair, and buried his face in his hands. Cleveland’s valet entered, and hustled about and unpacked the portmanteau, and arranged the evening dress. But Ernest did not look up nor speak ; the first bell sounded ; the second tolled unheard upon his ear. He was thoroughly overcome by his emotions. The first notes of Cleveland’s kind voice had touched upon a soft chord, that months of anxiety and excitement had strained to anguish, but had never woken to tears. His nerves were shattered—those strong young nerves ! He thought of his dead father when he first saw Cleveland ; but when he glanced round the room prepared for him, and observed the care for his comfort, and the tender recollection of his most trifling peculiarities everywhere visible, Alice, the watchful, the humble, the loving, the lost Alice, rose before him. Surprised at his ward’s delay, Cleveland entered the room ; there sat Ernest still, his face buried in his hands. Cleveland drew them gently away, and Maltravers sobbed like an infant. It was an easy matter to bring tears to the eyes of that young man : a gener-

ous or a tender thought, an old song, the simplest air of music, sufficed for that touch of the mother's nature. But the vehement and awful passion which belongs to manhood when thoroughly unmanned—this was the first time in which the relief of that stormy bitterness was known to him !

CHAPTER XIV.

Musing full sadly in his sullen mind.—SPENSER.

There forth issued from under the altar-smoke
A dreadful fiend.—*Ibid., on Superstition.*

NINE times out of ten it is over the Bridge of Sighs that we pass the narrow gulf from Youth to Manhood. That interval is usually occupied by an ill-placed or disappointed affection. We recover, and we find ourselves a new being. The intellect has become hardened by the fire through which it has passed. The mind profits by the wrecks of every passion, and we may measure our road to wisdom by the sorrows we have undergone. But Maltravers was yet *on* the bridge, and for a time both mind and body were prostrate and enfeebled. Cleveland had the sagacity to discover that the affections had their share in the change that he grieved to witness, but he had also the delicacy not to force himself into the young man's confidence. But by little and little his kindness so completely penetrated the heart of his ward, that Ernest one evening told him his whole tale. As a man of the world, Cleveland perhaps rejoiced that it was no worse, for he had feared some existing entanglement, perhaps, with a married

woman. But as a man who was better than the world in general, he sympathised with the unfortunate girl whom Ernest pictured to him in faithful and unflattered colours, and he long forbore consolations which he foresaw would be unavailing. He felt, indeed, that Ernest was not a man “to betray the noon of manhood to a myrtle-shade ;”—that with so sanguine, buoyant, and hardy a temperament, he would at length recover from a depression which, if it could bequeath a warning, might as well not be wholly divested of remorse. And he also knew that few become either great authors or great men (and he fancied Ernest was born to be one or the other), without the fierce emotions and passionate struggles, through which the Wilhelm Meister of Real Life must work out his apprenticeship, and attain the Master-Rank. But at last he had serious misgivings about the health of his ward. A constant and spectral gloom seemed bearing the young man to the grave. It was in vain that Cleveland, who secretly desired him to thirst for a public career, endeavoured to arouse his ambition : the boy’s spirit seemed quite broken—and the visit of a political character, the mention of a political work, drove him at once into his solitary chamber. At length his mental disease took a new turn. He became, of a sudden, most morbidly, and fanatically—I was about to say religious : but that is not the word ; let me call it pseudo-religious. His strong sense and cultivated taste did not allow him to delight in the raving tracts of illiterate fanatics—and yet out of the benign and simple elements of the

Scripture he conjured up for himself a fanaticism quite as gloomy and intense. He lost sight of God the Father, and night and day dreamed only of God the Avenger. His vivid imagination was perverted to raise out of its own abyss phantoms of colossal terror. He shuddered aghast at his own creations, and earth and heaven alike seemed black with the everlasting wrath. These symptoms completely baffled and perplexed Cleveland. He knew not what remedy to administer ; and to his unspeakable grief and surprise he found that Ernest, in the true spirit of his strange bigotry, began to regard Cleveland—the amiable, the benevolent Cleveland—as one no less out of the pale of grace than himself. His elegant pursuits, his cheerful studies, were considered by the young but stern enthusiast as the miserable recreations of Mammon and the world. There seemed every probability that Ernest Maltravers would die in a madhouse, or, at best, succeed to the delusions, without the cheerful intervals, of Cowper.

CHAPTER XV.

Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless—unfixed in principles and place.—DRYDEN.

Whoever acquires a very great number of ideas interesting to the society
in which he lives, will be regarded in that society as a man of abilities.

HELVETIUS.

IT was just when Ernest Maltravers was so bad that he could not be worse, that a young man visited Temple Grove. The name of this young man was Lumley Ferrers, his age about twenty-six, his fortune about eight hundred a-year ; he followed no profession. Lumley Ferrers had not what is usually called genius—that is, he had no enthusiasm ; and if the word talent be properly interpreted as meaning the talent of doing something better than others, Ferrers had not much to boast of on that score. He had no talent for writing, nor for music, nor painting, nor the ordinary round of accomplishments ; neither at present had he displayed much of the hard and useful talent for action and business. But Ferrers had what is often better than either genius or talent ; he had a powerful and most acute mind. He had, moreover, great animation of manner, high physical spirits, a witty, odd, racy vein of conversation, deter-

mined assurance, and profound confidence in his own resources. He was fond of schemes, stratagems, and plots—they amused and excited him: his power of sarcasm, and of argument, too, was great, and he usually obtained an astonishing influence over those with whom he was brought in contact. His high spirits and a most happy frankness of bearing carried off and disguised his leading vices of character, which were callousness to whatever was affectionate, and insensibility to whatever was moral. Though less learned than Maltravers, he was, on the whole, a very instructed man. He mastered the surface of many sciences, became satisfied of their general principles, and threw the study aside never to be forgotten (for his memory was like a vice), but never to be prosecuted any further. To this he added a general acquaintance with whatever is most generally acknowledged as standard in ancient or modern literature. What is admired only by a few, Lumley never took the trouble to read. Living amongst trifles, he made them interesting and novel by his mode of viewing and treating them. And here, indeed, was a talent—it was the talent of social life—the talent of enjoyment to the utmost with the least degree of trouble to himself. Lumley Ferrers was thus exactly one of those men whom everybody calls exceedingly clever, and yet it would puzzle one to say in what he was so clever. It was, indeed, that nameless power which belongs to ability, and which makes one man superior, on the whole, to another, though in many details by no means remarkable. I think it is Goethe who says somewhere,

that, in reading the life of the greatest genius, we always find that he was acquainted with some men superior to himself, who yet never attained to general distinction. To the class of these mystical superior men, Lumley Ferrers might have belonged ; for though an ordinary journalist would have beaten him in the arts of composition, few men of genius, however eminent, could have felt themselves above Ferrers in the ready grasp and plastic vigour of natural intellect. It only remains to be said of this singular young man, whose character as yet was but half developed, that he had seen a great deal of the world, and could live at ease and in content with all tempers and ranks ; fox-hunters or scholars, lawyers or poets, patricians or *parvenus*, it was all one to Lumley Ferrers.

Ernest was, as usual, in his own room, when he heard along the corridor without, all that indefinable bustling noise which announces an arrival. Next came a most ringing laugh, and then a sharp, clear, vigorous voice, that ran through his ears like a dagger. Ernest was immediately aroused to all the majesty of indignant sullenness. He walked out on the terrace of the portico to avoid the repetition of the disturbance, and once more settled back into his broken and hypochondriacal reveries. Pacing to and fro that part of the peristyle which occupied the more retired wing of the house, with his arms folded, his eyes downcast, his brows knit, and all the angel darkened on that countenance, which formerly looked as if, like truth, it could shame the devil and defy the world, Ernest followed the evil

thought that mastered him, through the Valley of the Shadow. Suddenly he was aware of something—some obstacle which he had not previously encountered. He started, and saw before him a young man, of plain dress, gentlemanlike appearance, and striking countenance.

"Mr Maltravers, I think," said the stranger, and Ernest recognised the voice that had so disturbed him : "this is lucky ; we can now introduce ourselves, for I find Cleveland means us to be intimate. Mr Lumley Ferrers, Mr Ernest Maltravers. There now, I am the elder, so I first offer my hand, and grin properly. People always grin when they make a new acquaintance ! Well, that's settled. Which way are you walking !"

Maltravers could, when he chose it, be as stately as if he had never been out of England. He now drew himself up in displeased astonishment ; extricated his hand from the gripe of Ferrers, and saying, very coldly, "Excuse me, sir ; I am busy," stalked back to his chamber. He threw himself into his chair, and was presently forgetful of his late annoyance, when, to his inexpressible amazement and wrath, he heard again the sharp, clear voice close to his elbow.

Ferrers had followed him through the French casements into the room. "You are busy, you say, my dear fellow. I want to write some letters : we shan't interrupt each other—don't disturb yourself :" and Ferrers seated himself at the writing-table, dipped a pen into the ink, arranged blotting-book and paper before

him in due order, and was soon employed in covering page after page with the most rapid and hieroglyphical scrawl that ever engrossed a mistress or perplexed a dun.

“The presuming puppy!” growled Maltravers, half audibly, but effectually roused from himself; and examining with some curiosity so cool an intruder, he was forced to own that the countenance of Ferrers was not that of a puppy.

A forehead compact and solid as a block of granite, overhung small, bright, intelligent eyes of a light hazel; the features were handsome, yet rather too sharp and fox-like; the complexion, though not highly coloured, was of that hardy, healthy hue which generally betokens a robust constitution and high animal spirits; the jaw was massive, and to a physiognomist betokened firmness and strength of character; but the lips, full and large, were those of a sensualist, and their restless play and habitual half-smile spoke of gaiety and humour, though when in repose there was in them something furtive and sinister.

Maltravers looked at him in grave silence; but when Ferrers, concluding his fourth letter before another man would have got through his first page, threw down the pen, and looked full at Maltravers, with a good-humoured but penetrating stare, there was something so whimsical in the intruder’s expression of face, and indeed in the whole scene, that Maltravers bit his lip to restrain a smile, the first he had known for weeks.

“I see you read, Maltravers,” said Ferrers, carelessly turning over the volumes on the table. “All very

right : we should begin life with books ; they multiply the sources of employment ; so does capital ;—but capital is of no use, unless we live on the interest,—books are waste-paper, unless we spend in action the wisdom we get from thought. Action, Maltravers, action ; that is the life for us. At our age we have passion, fancy, sentiment ; we can't read them away, nor scribble them away ;—we must live upon them generously, but economically."

Maltravers was struck ; the intruder was not the empty bore he had chosen to fancy him. He roused himself languidly to reply. "Life, *Mr Ferrers*—"

"Stop, *mon cher*, stop ; don't call me Mister ; we are to be friends ; I hate delaying that which *must* be, even by a superfluous dissyllable ; you are Maltravers, I am Ferrers. But you were going to talk about life. Suppose we *live* a little while, instead of talking about it. It wants an hour to dinner ; let us stroll into the grounds ; I want to get an appetite ; besides, I like nature, when there are no Swiss mountains to climb before one can arrive at a prospect. *Allons !*"

"Excuse—" again began Maltravers, half interested, half annoyed.

"I'll be shot if I do. Come."

Ferrers gave Maltravers his hat, wound his arm into that of his new acquaintance, and they were on the broad terrace by the lake before Ernest was aware of it.

How animated, how eccentric, how easy was Ferrers's

talk (for talk it was, rather than conversation, since he had the ball to himself) ; books, and men, and things, —he tossed them about and played with them like shuttlecocks ; and then his egotistical narrative of half a hundred adventures, in which he had been the hero, told so that you laughed *at* him and laughed with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east.—MILTON.

HITHERTO Ernest had never met with any mind that had exercised a strong influence over his own. At home, at school, at Gottingen, everywhere he had been the brilliant and wayward leader of others, persuading or commanding wiser and older heads than his own : even Cleveland always yielded to him, though not aware of it. In fact, it seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those *much* older than ourselves. It is the Senior of from two to ten years that most seduces and entrals us. He has the same pursuits, views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all. He goes with us in the path we are ordained to tread, but from which the elder generation desires to warn us off. There is very little influence where there is not great sympathy. It was now an epoch in the intellectual life of Maltravers. He met for the first time with a mind that controlled his own. Perhaps the physical state of his nerves made him less able to cope with the half-bullying, but thoroughly good-humoured imperiousness of Ferrers. Every day this

stranger became more and more potential with Maltravers. Ferrers, who was an utter egotist, never asked his new friend to give him his confidence ; he never cared three straws about other people's secrets, unless useful to some purpose of his own. But he talked with so much zest about himself—about women, and pleasure, and the gay, stirring life of cities—that the young spirit of Maltravers was roused from its dark lethargy without an effort of its own. The gloomy phantoms vanished gradually—his sense broke from its cloud—he felt once more that God had given the sun to light the day, and even in the midst of darkness had called up the host of stars.

Perhaps no other person could have succeeded so speedily in curing Maltravers of his diseased enthusiasm : a crude or sarcastic unbeliever he would not have listened to ; a moderate and enlightened divine he would have disregarded as a worldly and cunning adjuster of laws celestial with customs earthly. But Lumley Ferrers, who, when he argued, never admitted a sentiment or a simile in reply, who wielded his plain iron logic like a hammer, which, though its metal seemed dull, kindled the ethereal spark with every stroke—Lumley Ferrers was just the man to resist the imagination, and convince the reason, of Maltravers ; and the moment the matter came to argument, the cure was soon completed ; for however we may darken and puzzle ourselves with fancies and visions, and the ingenuities of fanatical mysticism, no man can mathematically or syllogistically contend that the world which

a God made, and a Saviour visited, was designed to be damned !

And Ernest Maltravers one night softly stole to his room and opened the New Testament, and read its heavenly moralities with purged eyes ; and when he had done, he fell upon his knees and prayed the Almighty to pardon the ungrateful heart that, worse than the atheist's, had confessed His existence, but denied His goodness. His sleep was sweet, and his dreams were cheerful. Did he rise to find that the penitence which had shaken his reason would henceforth suffice to save his life from all error ? Alas ! remorse overstrained has too often reactions as dangerous ; and homely Luther says well, that "the mind, like the drunken peasant on horseback, when propped on one side, nods and falls on the other."—All that can be said is, that there are certain crises in life which leave us long weaker ; from which the system recovers with frequent revulsion and weary relapse,—but from which, looking back, after years have passed on, we date the foundation of strength or the cure of disease. It is not to mean souls that creation is darkened by a fear of the anger of Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

There are times when we are diverted out of errors, but could not be preached out of them. There are practitioners who can cure us of one disorder, though, in ordinary cases, they be but poor physicians—nay, dangerous quacks.—STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

LUMLEY FERRERS had one rule in life ; and it was this —to make all things and all persons subservient to himself. And Ferrers now intended to go abroad for some years. He wanted a companion, for he disliked solitude : besides, a companion shared the expenses ; and a man of eight hundred a-year, who desires all the luxuries of life, does not despise a partner in the taxes to be paid for them. Ferrers, at this period, rather liked Ernest than not : it was convenient to choose friends from those richer than himself ; and he resolved, when he first came to Temple Grove, that Ernest should be his travelling companion. This resolution formed, it was very easy to execute it.

Maltravers was now warmly attached to his new friend, and eager for change. Cleveland was sorry to part with him ; but he dreaded a relapse, if the young man were again left upon his hands. Accordingly the guardian's consent was obtained ; a travelling-carriage

was bought, and fitted up with every imaginable imperial and *malle*. A Swiss (half valet and half courier) was engaged ; one thousand a-year was allowed to Maltravers ;—and one soft and lovely morning towards the close of October, Ferrers and Maltravers found themselves midway on the road to Dover.

“How glad I am to get out of England,” said Ferrers ! “it is a famous country for the rich ; but here, eight hundred a-year, without a profession, save that of pleasure, goes upon pepper and salt ; it is a luxurious competence abroad.”

“I think I have heard Cleveland say that you will be rich some day or other.”

“O yes ; I have what are called expectations ! You must know that I have a kind of settlement on two stools, the Well-born and the Wealthy ; but between two stools—you recollect the proverb ! The present Lord Saxingham, once plain Frank Lascelles, and my father, Mr Ferrers, were first cousins. Two or three relations good-naturedly died, and Frank Lascelles became an earl ; the lands did not go with the coronet ; he was poor, and married an heiress. The lady died ; her estate was settled on her only child, the handsomest little girl you ever saw. Pretty Florence, I often wish I could look up to you ! Her fortune will be nearly all at her own disposal, too, when she comes of age : now she’s in the nursery, ‘eating bread and honey.’ My father, less lucky and less wise than his cousin, thought fit to marry a Miss Templeton—a

nobody. The Saxingham branch of the family politely dropped the acquaintance. Now, my mother had a brother, a clever, plodding fellow, in what is called ‘business’: he became rich and richer; but my father and mother died, and were never the better for it. And I came of age, and *worth* (I like that expression) not a farthing more or less than this often-quoted eight hundred pounds a-year. My rich uncle is married, but has no children. I am, therefore, heir-presumptive,—but he is a saint, and close, though ostentatious. The quarrel between Uncle Templeton and the Saxinghams still continues. Templeton is angry if I see the Saxinghams; and the Saxinghams—my Lord, at least—is by no means so sure that I shall be Templeton’s heir as not to feel a doubt lest I should some day or other sponge upon his lordship for a place. Lord Saxingham is in the administration, you know. Somehow or other I have an equivocal amphibious kind of place in London society, which I don’t like; on one side I am a patrician connection, whom the parvenu branches always incline lovingly to—and on the other side I am a half-dependent cadet, whom the noble relations look civilly shy at. Some day, when I grow tired of travel and idleness, I shall come back and wrestle with these little difficulties, conciliate my methodistical uncle, and grapple with my noble cousin. But now I am fit for something better than getting on in the world. Dry chips, not green wood, are the things for making a blaze! How slow this fellow

drives ! Hollo, you sir ! get on ! mind, twelve miles to the hour ! You shall have sixpence a-mile. Give me your purse, Maltravers ; I may as well be cashier, being the elder and the wiser man ; we can settle accounts at the end of the journey. By Jove, what a pretty girl ! ”

BOOK II.

Θνητῶν δ' ὅφρα τις ἄνθος ἔχῃ πολυνήρατον ἡβης,
Κοῦφον ἔχων θυμὸν, πόλλα' ἀτέλεστα νοεῖ.

SIMONIDES, *in Vit. Hum.*

“ He, of wide-blooming youth’s fair flower possest,
Owns the vain thoughts—the heart that cannot rest ! ”

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

Il y eut certainement quelque chose de singulier dans mes sentimens pour cette charmante femme." *—ROUSSEAU.

IT was a brilliant ball at the Palazzo of the Austrian embassy at Naples: and a crowd of those loungers, whether young or old, who attach themselves to the reigning beauty, was gathered round Madame de Ventadour. Generally speaking, there is more caprice than taste in the election of a beauty to the Idalian throne. Nothing disappoints a stranger more than to see for the first time the woman to whom the world has given the golden apple. Yet he usually falls at last into the popular idolatry, and passes with inconceivable rapidity from indignant scepticism into superstitious veneration. In fact, a thousand things besides mere symmetry of feature go to make up the Cytherea of the hour . . . tact in society—the charm of manner

* There certainly was something singular in my sentiments for this charming woman.

—a nameless and piquant brilliancy. Where the world find the Graces they proclaim the Venus. Few persons attain pre-eminent celebrity for anything, without some adventitious and extraneous circumstances which have nothing to do with the thing celebrated. Some qualities or some circumstances throw a mysterious or personal charm about them. “Is Mr So-and-So really such a genius?” “Is Mrs Such-a-One really such a beauty?” you ask incredulously. “Oh, yes,” is the answer. “Do you know all *about* him or her? Such a thing is said, or such a thing has happened.” The idol is interesting in itself, and therefore its leading and popular attribute is worshipped.

Now Madame de Ventadour was at this time the beauty of Naples; and though fifty women in the room were handsomer, no one would have dared to say so. Even the women confessed her pre-eminence—for she was the most perfect dresser that even France could exhibit. And to no pretensions do ladies ever concede with so little demur, as those which depend upon that feminine art which all study, and in which few excel. Women never allow beauty in a face that has an odd-looking bonnet above it, nor will they readily allow any one to be ugly whose caps are unexceptionable. Madame de Ventadour had also the magic that results from intuitive high-breeding, polished by habit to the utmost. She looked and moved the *grande dame*, as if Nature had been employed by Rank to make her so. She was descended from one of the most illustrious houses of France; had married at sixteen

a man of equal birth, but old, dull, and pompous—a caricature rather than a portrait of that great French *noblesse*, now almost if not wholly extinct. But her virtue was without a blemish—some said from pride, some said from coldness. Her wit was keen and court-like—lively, yet subdued ; for her French high-breeding was very different from the lethargic and taciturn imperturbability of the English. All silent people can seem conventionally elegant. A groom married a rich lady ; he dreaded the ridicule of the guests whom his new rank assembled at his table—an Oxford clergyman gave him this piece of advice, “ Wear a black coat, and hold your tongue !” The groom took the hint, and is always considered one of the most gentlemanlike fellows in the country. Conversation is the touchstone of the true delicacy and subtle grace which make the ideal of the moral mannerism of a court. And there sat Madame de Ventadour, a little apart from the dancers, with the silent English dandy Lord Taunton, exquisitely dressed and superbly tall, bolt upright behind her chair ; and the sentimental German Baron Von Schomberg, covered with orders, whiskered and wigged to the last hair of perfection, sighing at her left hand ; and the French minister, shrewd, bland, and eloquent, in the chair at her right ; and round on all sides pressed, and bowed, and complimented, a crowd of diplomatic secretaries and Italian princes, whose bank is at the gaming-table, whose estates are in their galleries, and who sell a picture, as English gentlemen cut down a wood, whenever the cards grow gloomy.

The charming De Ventadour ! she had attraction for them all! smiles for the silent, badinage for the gay, politics for the Frenchman, poetry for the German—the eloquence of loveliness for all ! She was looking her best —the slightest possible tinge of rouge gave a glow to her transparent complexion, and lighted up those large dark sparkling eyes (with a latent softness beneath the sparkle), seldom seen but in the French—and widely distinct from the unintellectual languish of the Spaniard, or the full and majestic fierceness of the Italian gaze. Her dress of black velvet, and graceful hat with its princely plume, contrasted the alabaster whiteness of her arms and neck. And what with the eyes, the skin, the rich colouring of the complexion, the rosy lips, and the small ivory teeth, no one would have had the cold hypercriticism to observe that the chin was too pointed, the mouth too wide, and the nose, so beautiful in the front face, was far from perfect in the profile.

“Pray was Madame in the Strada Nuova to-day ?” asked the German, with as much sweetness in his voice as if he had been vowed eternal love.

“What else have we to do with our mornings, we women ?” replied Madame de Ventadour. “Our life is a lounge from the cradle to the grave ; and our afternoons are but the type of our career. A promenade and a crowd,—*voilà tout !* We never see the world except in an open carriage.”

“It is the pleasantest way of seeing it,” said the Frenchman, dryly.

"I doubt it ; the worst fatigue is that which comes without exercise."

"Will you do me the honour to waltz ?" said the tall English lord, who had a vague idea that Madame de Ventadour meant she would rather dance than sit still. The Frenchman smiled.

"Lord Taunton enforces your own philosophy," said the minister.

Lord Taunton smiled because every one else smiled ; and, besides, he had beautiful teeth : but he looked anxious for an answer.

"Not to-night—I seldom dance. Who is that very pretty woman ? What lovely complexions the English have ! And who," continued Madame de Ventadour, without waiting for an answer to the first question, "who is that gentleman—the young one I mean—leaning against the door ?"

"What ! with the dark mustache ?" said Lord Taunton—"he is a cousin of mine."

"Oh no ; not Colonel Bellfield ; I know him—how amusing he is !—no ; the gentleman I mean wears no mustache."

"Oh, the tall Englishman with the bright eyes and high forehead ?" said the French minister. "He is just arrived—from the East, I believe."

"It is a striking countenance," said Madame de Ventadour ; "there is something chivalrous in the turn of the head. Without doubt, Lord Taunton, he is '*noble*.' "

“He is what you call ‘*noble*,’” replied Lord Taunton—“that is what we call a ‘gentleman,’—his name is Maltravers—Mr Maltravers. He lately came of age; and has, I believe, rather a good property.”

“Monsieur Maltravers; only Monsieur!” repeated Madame de Ventadour.

“Why,” said the French minister, “you understand that the English *gentilhomme* does not require a De or a title to distinguish him from the *roturier*.”

“I know that; but he has an air above a simple *gentilhomme*. There is something *great* in his look; but it is not, I must own, the conventional greatness of rank; perhaps he would have looked the same had he been born a peasant.”

“You don’t think him handsome!” said Lord Taunton, almost angrily (for he was one of the Beauty-men, and Beauty-men are sometimes jealous).

“Handsome! I did not say that,” replied Madame de Ventadour, smiling; “it is rather a fine head than a handsome face. Is he clever, I wonder?—but all you English, milord, are well educated.”

“Yes, profound—profound; we are profound, not superficial,” replied Lord Taunton, drawing down his wristbands.

“Will Madame de Ventadour allow me to present to her one of my countrymen?” said the English minister, approaching—“Mr Maltravers.”

Madame de Ventadour half smiled and half blushed as she looked up, and saw bent admiringly upon her the proud and earnest countenance she had remarked.

The introduction was made—a few monosyllables exchanged. The French diplomatist rose and walked away with the English one. Maltravers succeeded to the vacant chair.

"Have you been long abroad?" asked Madame de Ventadour.

"Only four years; yet long enough to ask whether I should not be most abroad in England."

"You have been in the East—I envy you. And Greece, and Egypt—all the associations! You have travelled back into the Past; you have escaped, as Madame d'Epinay wished, out of civilisation and into romance."

"Yet Madame d'Epinay passed her own life in making pretty romances out of a very agreeable civilisation," said Maltravers, smiling.

"You know her memoirs, then," said Madame de Ventadour, slightly colouring. "In the current of a more exciting literature, few have had time for the second-rate writings of a past century."

"Are not those second-rate performances often the most charming," said Maltravers, "when the mediocrity of the intellect seems almost as if it were the effect of a touching, though too feeble delicacy of sentiment? Madame d'Epinay's memoirs are of this character. She was not a virtuous woman—but she felt virtue and loved it; she was not a woman of genius—but she was tremblingly alive to all the influences of genius. Some people seem born with the temperament and the tastes of genius without its creative power;

they have its nervous system, but something is wanting in the intellectual. They feel acutely, yet express tamely. These persons always have in their character an unspeakable kind of pathos—a court civilisation produces many of them—and the French memoirs of the last century are particularly fraught with such examples. This is interesting—the struggle of sensitive minds against the lethargy of a society, dull yet brilliant, that *glares* them, as it were, to sleep. It comes home to us ! for,” added Maltravers, with a slight change of voice, “ how many of us fancy we see our own image in the mirror !”

And where was the German baron ?—flirting at the other end of the room. And the English lord?—dropping monosyllables to dandies by the doorway. And the minor satellites ?—dancing, whispering, making love, or sipping lemonade. And Madame de Ventadour was alone with the young stranger in a crowd of eight hundred persons ; and their lips spoke of sentiment, and their eyes involuntarily applied it !

While they were thus conversing, Maltravers was suddenly startled by hearing close behind him a sharp significant voice, saying in French, “ Hein, hein ! I’ve my suspicions—I’ve my suspicions.”

Madame de Ventadour looked round with a smile. “ It is only my husband,” said she, quietly ; “ let me introduce him to you.”

Maltravers rose and bowed to a little thin man, most elaborately dressed, with an immense pair of spectacles upon a long sharp nose.

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said Monsieur de Ventadour. "Have you been long in Naples? Beautiful weather—won't last long—hein, hein, I've my suspicions! No news as to your parliament—be dissolved soon! Bad opera in London this year;—hein, hein—I've my suspicions."

This rapid monologue was delivered with appropriate gesture. Each new sentence Mons. de Ventadour began with a sort of bow, and when it dropped in the almost invariable conclusion affirmative of his shrewdness and incredulity, he made a mystical sign with his forefinger by passing it upward in a parallel line with his nose, which at the same time performed its own part in the ceremony by three convulsive twitches that seemed to shake the bridge to its base.

Maltravers looked with mute surprise upon the con-nubial partner of the graceful creature by his side, and Mons. de Ventadour, who had said as much as he thought necessary, wound up his eloquence by expressing the rapture it would give him to see Mons. Maltravers at his hotel. Then, turning to his wife, he began assuring her of the lateness of the hour, and the expediency of departure. Maltravers glided away, and as he regained the door was seized by our old friend, Lumley Ferrers. "Come, my dear fellow," said the latter; "I have been waiting for you this half hour. *Allons.* But, perhaps, as I am dying to go to bed, you have made up your mind to stay supper. Some people have no regard for other people's feelings."

"No, Ferrers, I'm at your service;" and the young

man descended the stairs and passed along the Chiaja towards their hotel. As they gained the broad and open space on which it stood, with the lovely sea before them, sleeping in the arms of the curving shore, Maltravers, who had hitherto listened in silence to the volubility of his companion, paused abruptly.

"Look at that sea, Ferrers. . . . What a scene!—what delicious air! How soft this moonlight! Can you not fancy the old Greek adventurers, when they first colonised this divine Parthenope—the darling of the ocean—gazing along those waves, and pining no more for Greece?"

"I cannot fancy anything of the sort," said Ferrers. . . . "And, depend upon it, the said gentlemen, at this hour of the night, unless they were on some piratical excursion—for they were cursed ruffians those old Greek colonists—were fast asleep in their beds."

"Did you ever write poetry, Ferrers?"

"To be sure; all clever men have written poetry once in their lives; small-pox and poetry—they are our two juvenile diseases."

"And did you ever *feel* poetry?"

"Feel it!"

"Yes; if you put the moon into your verses, did you first feel it shining into your heart?"

"My dear Maltravers, if I put the moon into my verses, in all probability it was to rhyme to noon. 'The night was at her noon'—is a capital ending for the first hexameter—and the moon is booked for the next stage. Come in."

"No, I shall stay out."

"Don't be nonsensical."

"By moonlight there is no nonsense like common sense."

"What! we, who have climbed the Pyramids, and sailed up the Nile, and seen magic at Cairo, and been nearly murdered, bagged, and Bosphorised at Constantinople—is it for us, who have gone through so many adventures, looked on so many scenes, and crowded into four years events that would have satisfied the appetite of a cormorant in romance, if it had lived to the age of a phoenix ;—is it for us to be doing the pretty and sighing to the moon, like a black-haired apprentice without a neckcloth, on board of the Margate hoy? Nonsense, I say—we have lived too much not to have lived away our green sickness of sentiment."

"Perhaps you are right, Ferrers," said Maltravers, smiling. "But I can still enjoy a beautiful night."

"Oh, if you like flies in *your* soup, as the man said to his guest, when he carefully replaced those entomological blackamoors in the tureen, after helping himself—if you like flies in your soup, well and good—*buona notte.*"

Ferrers certainly was right in his theory, that when we have known real adventures we grow less morbidly sentimental. Life is a sleep in which we dream most at the commencement and the close—the middle part absorbs us too much for dreams. But still, as Maltravers said, we can enjoy a fine night, especially on the shores of Naples.

Maltravers paced musingly to and fro for some time. His heart was softened—old rhymes rang in his ear—old memories passed through his brain. But the sweet dark eyes of Madame de Ventadour shone forth through every shadow of the past. Delicious intoxication—the draught of the rose-coloured phial—which is fancy, but seems love !

CHAPTER II.

Then 'gan the Palmer thus—“ Most wretched man,
That to affections dost the bridle lend :
In their begining they are weak and wan,
But soon, through suffrance, growe to fearfull end ;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend.”

SPENSER.

MALTRavers went frequently to the house of Madame de Ventadour—it was open twice a-week to the world, and thrice a-week to friends. Maltravers was soon of the latter class. Madame de Ventadour had been in England in her childhood, for her parents had been *émigrés*. She spoke English well and fluently, and this pleased Maltravers ; for though the French language was sufficiently familiar to him, he was like most who are more vain of the mind than the person, and proudly averse to hazarding his best thoughts in the domino of a foreign language. We don't care how faulty the accent, or how incorrect the idiom, in which we talk nothings ; but if we utter any of the poetry within us, we shudder at the risk of the most trifling solecism.

This was especially the case with Maltravers ; for, besides being now somewhat ripened from his careless

boyhood into a proud and fastidious man, he had a natural love for the Becoming. This love was unconsciously visible in trifles : it is the natural parent of Good Taste. And it was indeed an inborn good taste which redeemed Ernest's natural carelessness in those personal matters, in which young men usually take a pride. A habitual and soldier-like neatness, and a love of order and symmetry, stood with him in the stead of elaborate attention to equipage and dress.

Maltravers had not thought twice in his life whether he was handsome or not ; and, like most men who have a knowledge of the gentler sex, he knew that beauty had little to do with engaging the love of women. The air, the manner, the tone, the conversation, the something that interests, and the something to be proud of—these are the attributes of the man made to be loved. And the Beauty-man is, nine times out of ten, little more than the oracle of his aunts, and the "*sitch a love*" of the housemaids !

To return from this digression, Maltravers was glad that he could talk in his own language to Madame de Ventadour ; and the conversation between them generally began in French, and glided away into English. Madame de Ventadour was eloquent, and so was Maltravers ; yet a more complete contrast in their mental views and conversational peculiarities can scarcely be conceived. Madame de Ventadour viewed everything as a woman of the world : she was brilliant, thoughtful, and not without delicacy and tenderness of sentiment ; still all was cast in a worldly mould. She had been

formed by the influences of society, and her mind betrayed its education. At once witty and melancholy (no uncommon union), she was a disciple of the sad but caustic philosophy produced by *Satiety*. In the life she led, neither her heart nor her head was engaged ; the faculties of both were irritated, not satisfied or employed. She felt somewhat too sensitively the hollowness of the great world, and had a low opinion of Human Nature. In fact, she was a woman of the French Memoirs—one of those charming and *spirituelles* Aspasias of the Boudoir, who interest us by their subtlety, tact, and grace, their exquisite tone of refinement, and are redeemed from the superficial and frivolous, partly by a consummate knowledge of the social system in which they move, and partly by a half-concealed and touching discontent of the trifles on which their talents and affections are wasted. These are the women who, after a youth of false pleasure, often end by an old age of false devotion. They are a class peculiar to those ranks and countries in which shines and saddens that gay and unhappy thing—*a woman without a home!*

Now this was a specimen of life—this Valerie de Ventadour—that Maltravers had never yet contemplated, and Maltravers was perhaps equally new to the Frenchwoman. They were delighted with each other's society, although it so happened that they never agreed.

Madame de Ventadour rode on horseback, and Maltravers was one of her usual companions. And

oh, the beautiful landscapes through which their daily excursions lay !

Maltravers was an admirable scholar. The stores of the immortal dead were as familiar to him as his own language. The poetry, the philosophy, the manner of thought and habits of life—of the graceful Greek and the luxurious Roman—were a part of knowledge that constituted a common and household portion of his own associations and peculiarities of thought. He had saturated his intellect with the Pactolus of old—and the grains of gold came down from the classic Tmolus with every tide. This knowledge of the dead, often so useless, has an inexpressible charm when it is applied to the places where the Dead lived. We care nothing about the ancients on Highgate Hill—but at Baiae, Pompeii, by the Virgilian Hades, the ancients are society with which we thirst to be familiar. To the animated and curious Frenchwoman what a cicerone was Ernest Maltravers ! How eagerly she listened to accounts of a life more elegant than that of Paris !—of a civilisation which the world never can know again ! So much the better ;—for it was rotten at the core, though most brilliant in the complexion. Those cold names and unsubstantial shadows which Madame de Ventadour had been accustomed to yawn over in skeleton histories, took from the eloquence of Maltravers the breath of life—they glowed and moved—they feasted and made love—were wise and foolish, merry and sad, like living things. On the other hand, Maltravers learned a thousand new secrets of the

existing and actual world from the lips of the accomplished and observant Valerie. What a new step in the philosophy of life does a young man of genius make, when he first compares his theories and experience with the intellect of a clever woman of the world ! Perhaps it does not elevate him, but how it enlightens and refines !—what numberless minute yet important mysteries in human character and practical wisdom does he drink unconsciously from the sparkling *persiflage* of such a companion ! Our education is hardly ever complete without it.

“ And so you think these stately Romans were not, after all, so dissimilar to ourselves ? ” said Valerie, one day, as they looked over the same earth and ocean along which had roved the eyes of the voluptuous but august Lucullus.

“ In the last days of their Republic, a *coup-d’œil* of their social state might convey to us a general notion of our own. Their system, like ours—a vast aristocracy heaved and agitated, but kept ambitious and intellectual, by the great democratic ocean which roared below and around it. An immense distinction between rich and poor—a nobility sumptuous, wealthy, cultivated, yet scarcely elegant or refined ;—a people with mighty aspirations for more perfect liberty, but always liable, in a crisis, to be influenced and subdued by a deep-rooted veneration for the very aristocracy against which they struggled ;—a ready opening through all the walls of custom and privilege for every description of talent and ambition ; but so strong and universal a

respect for wealth, that the finest spirit grew avaricious, griping, and corrupt, almost unconsciously ; and the man who rose from the people did not scruple to enrich himself out of the abuses he affected to lament ; and the man who would have died for his country could not help thrusting his hands into her pockets. Cassius, the stubborn and thoughtful patriot, with his heart of iron, had, you remember, an itching palm. Yet, what a blow to all the hopes and dreams of a world was the overthrow of the free party after the death of Cæsar ! What generations of freemen fell at Philippi ! In England, perhaps, we may have ultimately the same struggle ; in France, too (perhaps a larger stage, with far more inflammable actors), we already perceive the same war of elements which shook Rome to her centre, which finally replaced the generous Julius with the hypocritical Augustus, which destroyed the colossal patricians to make way for the glittering dwarfs of a court, and cheated a people out of the substance with the shadow of liberty. How it may end in the modern world, who shall say ? But while a nation has already a fair degree of constitutional freedom, I believe no struggle so perilous and awful as that between the aristocratical and the democratic principle. A people against a despot—*that* contest requires no prophet ; but the change from an aristocratical to a democratic commonwealth is indeed the wide, unbounded prospect upon which rest shadows, clouds, and darkness. If it fail, for centuries is the dial hand of Time put back ; if it succeed——”

Maltravers paused.

"And if it succeed?" said Valerie.

"Why, then, man will have colonised Utopia!" replied Maltravers.

"But at least, in modern Europe," he continued, "there will be fair room for the experiment. For we have not that curse of slavery which, more than all else, vitiated every system of the ancients, and kept the rich and the poor alternately at war; and we have a press, which is not only the safety-valve of the passions of every party, but the great note-book of the experiments of every hour—the homely, the invaluable ledger of losses and of gains. No: the people who keep that tablet well never can be bankrupt. And the society of those old Romans; their daily passions—occupations—humours!—why, the satire of Horace is the glass of our own follies! We may fancy his easy pages written in the Chaussée d'Antin, or May-fair; but there was one thing that will ever keep the ancient world dissimilar from the modern."

"And what is that?"

"The ancients knew not that delicacy in the affections which characterises the descendants of the Goths," said Maltravers, and his voice slightly trembled; "they gave up to the monopoly of the senses what ought to have had an equal share in the reason and the imagination. Their love was a beautiful and wanton butterfly; but not the butterfly which is the emblem of the soul."

Valeric sighed. She looked timidly into the face of the young philosopher, but his eyes were averted.

"Perhaps," she said, after a short pause, "we pass our lives more happily without love than with it. And in our modern social system," she continued, thoughtfully, and with profound truth, though it is scarcely the conclusion to which a woman often arrives, "I think we have pampered Love to too great a preponderance over the other excitements of life. As children, we are taught to dream of it; in youth, our books, our conversation, our plays, are filled with it. We are trained to consider it the essential of life; and yet, the moment we come to actual experience, the moment we indulge this inculcated and stimulated craving, nine times out of ten we find ourselves wretched and undone. Ah, believe me, Mr Maltravers, this is not a world in which we should preach up, too far, the philosophy of Love!"

"And does Madame de Ventadour speak from experience?" asked Maltravers, gazing earnestly upon the changing countenance of his companion.

"No; and I trust that I never may!" said Valerie, with great energy.

Ernest's lip curled slightly, for his pride was touched.

"I could give up many dreams of the future," said he, "to hear Madame de Ventadour revoke that sentiment."

"We have outridden our companions, Mr Maltravers," said Valerie, coldly, and she reined in her horse. "Ah, Mr Ferrers," she continued, as Lumley and the

handsome German baron now joined her, “you are too gallant ; I see you imply a delicate compliment to my horsemanship, when you wish me to believe you cannot keep up with me : Mr Maltravers is not so polite.”

“Nay,” returned Ferrers, who rarely threw away a compliment without a satisfactory return—“nay, you and Maltravers appeared lost among the old Romans ; and our friend the baron took that opportunity to tell me of all the ladies who adored him.”

“Ah, Monsieur Ferrare, *que vous êtes malin !*” said Schomberg, looking very much confused.

“*Malin !* no ; I spoke from no envy : I never was adored, thank Heaven ! What a bore it must be !”

“I congratulate you on the sympathy between yourself and Ferrers,” whispered Maltravers to Valerie.

Valerie laughed ; but during the rest of the excursion she remained thoughtful and absent, and for some days their rides were discontinued. Madame de Ventadour was not well.

CHAPTER III.

O Love, forsake me not ;
Mine were a lone dark lot
Bereft of thee.

HEMANS, *Genius singing to Love.*

I FEAR that as yet Ernest Maltravers had gained little from Experience, except a few current coins of worldly wisdom (and not very valuable those !), while he had lost much of that nobler wealth with which youthful enthusiasm sets out on the journey of life. Experience is an open giver, but a stealthy thief. There is, however, this to be said in her favour, that we retain her gifts ; and if ever we demand restitution in earnest, 'tis ten to one but what we recover her thefts. Maltravers had lived in lands where public opinion is neither strong in its influence, nor rigid in its canons ; and that does not make a man better. Moreover, thrown headlong amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth, with ardent passions and intellectual superiority, he had been led by the one into many errors, from the consequences of which the other had delivered him ; the necessity of roughing it through the world—of resisting fraud to-day, and violence to-morrow—had hardened over the surface of his heart,

though at bottom the springs were still fresh and living. He had lost much of his chivalrous veneration for women, for he had seen them less often deceived than deceiving. Again, too, the last few years had been spent without any high aims or fixed pursuits. Maltravers had been living on the capital of his faculties and affections in a wasteful, speculating spirit. It is a bad thing for a clever and ardent man not to have from the onset some paramount object of life.

All this considered, we can scarcely wonder that Maltravers should have fallen into an involuntary system of pursuing his own amusements and pursuits, without much forethought of the harm or the good they were to do to others or himself. The moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of duty; and though it seems like a paradox, we can seldom be careless without being selfish.

In seeking the society of Madame de Ventadour, Maltravers obeyed but the mechanical impulse that leads the idler towards the companionship which most pleases his leisure. He was interested and excited; and Valerie's manners, which to-day flattered, and to-morrow piqued him, enlisted his vanity and pride on the side of his fancy. But although Monsieur de Ventadour, a frivolous and profligate Frenchman, seemed utterly indifferent as to what his wife chose to do—and in the society in which Valerie lived, almost every lady had her cavalier,—yet Maltravers would have started with incredulity or dismay had any one accused him of a systematic design on her affections. But he was living

with the world, and the world affected him as it almost always does every one else. Still he had, at times, in his heart, the feeling that he was not fulfilling his proper destiny and duties ; and when he stole from the brilliant resorts of an unworthy and heartless pleasure, he was ever and anon haunted by his old familiar aspirations for the Beautiful, the Virtuous, and the Great. However, hell is paved with good intentions ; and so, in the meanwhile, Ernest Maltravers surrendered himself to the delicious presence of Valerie de Ventadour.

One evening Maltravers, Ferrers, the French minister, a pretty Italian, and the Princess di ——, made the whole party collected at Madame de Ventadour's. The conversation fell upon one of the tales of scandal relative to English persons, so common on the Continent.

“ Is it true, Monsieur,” said the French minister, gravely, to Lumley, “ that your countrymen are much more immoral than other people ? It is very strange, but in every town I enter, there is always some story in which *les Anglais* are the heroes. I hear nothing of French scandal—nothing of Italian—*toujours les Anglais.*”

“ Because we are shocked at these things, and make a noise about them, while you take them quietly. Vice is our episode—your epic.”

“ I suppose it is so,” said the Frenchman, with affected seriousness. “ If we cheat at play, or flirt with a fair lady, we do it with decorum, and our neighbours

think it no business of theirs. But you treat every frailty you find in your countrymen as a public concern, to be discussed and talked over, and exclaimed against, and told to all the world."

"I like the system of scandal," said Madame de Ventadour, abruptly, "say what you will ; the policy of fear keeps many of us virtuous. Sin might not be odious, if we did not tremble at the consequence even of appearances."

"Hein, hein," grunted Monsieur de Ventadour, shuffling into the room. "How are you ?—how are you ? Charmed to see you. Dull night—I suspect we shall have rain. Hein, hein. Aha, Monsieur Ferrers, *comment ça va-t-il ?* will you give me my revenge at *écarté* ? I have my suspicions that I am in luck to-night. Hein, hein."

"*Ecarté !*—well, with pleasure," said Ferrers.
Ferrers played well.

The conversation ended in a moment. The little party gathered round the table—all except Valerie and Maltravers. The chairs that were vacated left a kind of breach between them ; but still they were next to each other, and they felt embarrassed, for they felt alone.

"Do you never play ?" asked Madame de Ventadour, after a pause.

"I *have* played," said Maltravers, "and I know the temptation. I dare not play now. I love the excitement, but I have been humbled at the debasement : it is a moral drunkenness that is worse than the physical."

"You speak warmly."

"Because I feel keenly. I once won of a man I respected, who was poor. His agony was a dreadful lesson to me. I went home, and was terrified to think I had felt so much pleasure in the pain of another. I have never played since that night."

"So young and so resolute!" said Valerie, with admiration in her voice and eyes; "you are a strange person. Others would have been cured by losing, you were cured by winning. It is a fine thing to have principle at your age, Mr Maltravers."

"I fear it was rather pride than principle," said Maltravers. "Error is sometimes sweet; but there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed. I cannot submit to blush for myself."

"Ah!" muttered Valerie; "this is the echo of my own heart!" She rose and went to the window. Maltravers paused a moment, and followed her. Perhaps he half thought there was an invitation in the movement.

There lay before them the still street, with its feeble and unfrequent lights; beyond, a few stars, struggling through an atmosphere unusually clouded, brought the murmuring ocean partially into sight. Valerie leaned against the wall, and the draperies of the window veiled her from all the guests, save Maltravers; and between her and himself was a large marble vase filled with flowers; and by that uncertain light Valerie's brilliant cheek looked pale, and soft, and thoughtful. Maltravers never before felt so much in love with the beautiful Frenchwoman.

"Ah, madam!" said he, softly; "there is one error, if it be so, that never can cost me shame."

"Indeed!" said Valerie, with an unaffected start, for she was not aware he was so near her. As she spoke she began plucking (it is a common woman's trick) the flowers from the vase between her and Ernest. That small, delicate, almost transparent hand! —Maltravers gazed upon the hand, then on the countenance, then on the hand again. The scene swam before him, and involuntarily, and as by an irresistible impulse, the next moment that hand was in his own.

"Pardon me—pardon me," said he, falteringly; "but that error is in the feelings that I know for you."

Valerie lifted on him her large and radiant eyes, and made no answer.

Maltravers went on. "Chide me, scorn me, hate me if you will. Valerie, I love you!"

Valerie drew away her hand, and still remained silent.

"Speak to me," said Ernest, leaning forward; "one word, I implore you—speak to me!"

He paused,—still no reply; he listened breathlessly—he heard her sob. Yes; that proud, that wise, that lofty woman of the world, in that moment, was as weak as the simplest girl that ever listened to a lover. But how different the feelings that made her weak!—what soft and what stern emotions were blent together!

"Mr Maltravers," she said, recovering her voice, though it sounded hollow, yet almost unnaturally firm and clear—"the die is cast, and I have lost for ever

the friend for whose happiness I cannot live, but for whose welfare I would have died ; I should have foreseen this, but I was blind. No more—no more ; see me to-morrow, and leave me now !”

“ But, Valerie——”

“ Ernest Maltravers,” said she, laying her hand lightly on his own, “ *there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed !* ”

Before he could reply to this citation from his own aphorism, Valerie had glided away ; and was already seated at the card-table, by the side of the Italian princess.

Maltravers also joined the group. He fixed his eyes on Madame de Ventadour, but her face was calm,—not a trace of emotion was discernible. Her voice, her smile, her charming and courtly manner, all were as when he first beheld her.

“ These women—what hypocrites they are !” muttered Maltravers to himself ; and his lip writhed into a sneer, which had of late often forced away the serene and gracious expression of his earlier years, ere he knew what it was to despise. But Maltravers mistook the woman he dared to scorn.

He soon withdrew from the palazzo, and sought his hotel. There, while yet musing in his dressing-room, he was joined by Ferrers. The time had passed when Ferrers had exercised an influence over Maltravers ; the boy had grown up to be the equal of the man, in the exercise of that two-edged sword—the reason. And Maltravers now felt, unalloyed, the calm consciousness

of his superior genius. He could not confide to Ferrers what had passed between him and Valerie. Lumley was too *hard* for a confidant in matters where the heart was at all concerned. In fact, in high spirits, and in the midst of frivolous adventures, Ferrers was charming. But in sadness, or in the moments of deep feeling, Ferrers was one whom you would wish out of the way.

"You are sullen to-night, *mon cher*," said Lumley, yawning; "I suppose you want to go to bed—some persons are so ill-bred, so selfish, they never think of their friends. Nobody asks me what I won at *écarté*. Don't be late to-morrow—I hate breakfasting alone, and *I* am never later than a quarter before nine—I hate egotistical, ill-mannered people. Good night."

With this, Ferrers sought his own room; there, as he slowly undressed, he thus soliloquised:—"I think I have put this man to all the use I can make of him. We don't pull well together any longer; perhaps I myself am a little tired of this sort of life. That is not right. I shall grow ambitious by-and-by; but I think it a bad calculation not to make the most of youth. At four or five-and-thirty it will be time enough to consider what one ought to be at fifty."

CHAPTER IV.

Most dangerous
Is that temptation that does goad us on
To sin in loving virtue.—*Measure for Measure*.

“SEE her to-morrow ! — that morrow is come ! ” thought Maltravers, as he rose the next day from a sleepless couch. Ere yet he had obeyed the impatient summons of Ferrers, who had thrice sent to say that “he never kept people waiting,” his servant entered with a packet from England, that had just arrived by one of those rare couriers who sometimes honour that Naples, which *might* be so lucrative a mart to English commerce, if Neapolitan kings cared for trade, or English senators for “foreign politics.” Letters from stewards and bankers were soon got through ; and Maltravers reserved for the last an epistle from Cleveland. There was much in it that touched him home. After some dry details about the property to which Maltravers had now succeeded, and some trifling comments upon trifling remarks in Ernest’s former letters, Cleveland went on thus :—

“I confess, my dear Ernest, that I long to welcome you back to England. You have been abroad long

enough to *see* other countries ; do not stay long enough to prefer them to your own. You are at Naples, too—I tremble for you. I know well that delicious, dreaming, holiday-life of Italy, so sweet to men of learning and imagination—so sweet, too, to youth—so sweet to pleasure ! But, Ernest, do you not feel already how it enervates ?—how the luxurious *far niente* unfits us for grave exertion ? Men may become too refined and too fastidious for useful purposes ; and nowhere can they become so more rapidly than in Italy. My dear Ernest, I know you well ; you are not made to sink down into a virtuoso, with a cabinet full of cameos and a head full of pictures ; still less are you made to be an indolent cicesbeo to some fair Italian, with one passion and two ideas : and yet I have known men as clever as you, whom that bewitching Italy has sunk into one or other of these insignificant beings. Don't run away with the notion that you have plenty of time before you. You have no such thing. At your age, and with your fortune (I wish you were not so rich !), the holiday of one year becomes the custom of the next. In England, to be a useful or a distinguished man, you must labour. Now, labour itself is sweet, if we take to it early. We are a hard race, but we are a manly one ; and our stage is the most exciting in Europe for an able and an honest ambition. Perhaps you will tell me you are not ambitious now ; very possibly—but ambitious you will be ; and, believe me, there is no unhappier wretch than a man who is ambitious but disappointed,—who has the desire for fame, but has

lost the power to achieve it,—who longs for the goal, but will not, and cannot, put away his slippers to walk to it. What I most fear for you is one of these two evils—an early marriage, or a fatal *liaison* with some married woman. The first evil is certainly the least, but for *you* it would still be a great one. With your sensitive romance, with your morbid cravings for the Ideal, domestic happiness would soon grow trite and dull. You would demand new excitement, and become a restless and disgusted man. It is necessary for you to get rid of all the false fever of life, before you settle down to everlasting ties. You do not yet know your own mind ; you would choose your partner from some visionary caprice, or momentary impulse, and not from the deep and accurate knowledge of those qualities which would most harmonise with your own character. People, to live happily with each other, must *fit in*, as it were—the proud be mated with the meek, the irritable with the gentle, and so forth. No, my dear Maltravers, do not think of marriage yet awhile ; and if there is any danger of it, come over to me immediately. But if I warn you against a lawful tie, how much more against an illicit one ! You are precisely of the age and of the disposition which render the temptation so strong and so deadly. With you, it might not be the sin of an hour, but the bondage of a life. I know your chivalric honour—your tender heart ; I know how faithful you would be to one who had sacrificed for you. But that fidelity, Maltravers, to what a life of wasted talent and energies would it

not compel you ! Putting aside for the moment (for that needs no comment) the question of the grand immorality—what so fatal to a bold and proud temper, as to be at war with society at the first entrance into life ? What so withering to manly aims and purposes, as the giving into the keeping of a woman, who has interest in your love, and interest against your career which might part you at once from her side—the control of your future destinies ? I could say more, but I trust what I have said is superfluous ; if so, pray assure me of it. Depend upon this, Ernest Maltravers, that if you do not fulfil what nature intended for your fate, you will be a morbid misanthrope, or an indolent voluptuary—wretched and listless in manhood, repining and joyless in old age. But if you do fulfil your fate, you must enter soon into your apprenticeship. Let me see you labour and aspire—no matter what in—what to. Work, work—that is all I ask of you !

“ I wish you could see your old country-house ; it has a venerable and picturesque look, and during your minority they have let the ivy cover three sides of it. Montaigne might have lived there. Adieu, dearest Ernest, Your anxious and affectionate guardian,

“ FREDERICK CLEVELAND.

“ P.S.—I am writing a book—it shall last me ten years—it occupies me, but does not fatigue. Write a book yourself.”

Maltravers had just finished this letter when Ferrers

entered impatiently, “Will you ride out?” said he. “I have sent the breakfast away ; I saw that breakfast was a vain hope to-day—indeed, *my* appetite is gone.”

“Pshaw !” said Maltravers.

“Pshaw ! humph ! for my part, I like well-bred people.”

“I have had a letter from Cleveland.”

“And what the deuce has that got to do with the chocolate ?”

“Oh, Lumley, you are insufferable ; you think of nothing but yourself, and self with you means nothing that is not animal.”

“Why, yes ; I believe I have some sense,” replied Ferrers, complacently. “I know the philosophy of life. All unfledged bipeds are animals, I suppose. If Providence had made me graminivorous, I should have eaten grass ; if ruminating, I should have chewed the cud ; but as it has made me a carnivorous, culinary, and cachinnatory animal, I eat a cutlet, scold about the sauce, and laugh at you ; and this is what *you* call being selfish !”

It was late at noon when Maltravers found himself at the palazzo of Madame de Ventadour. He was surprised, but agreeably so, that he was admitted, for the first time, into that private sanctum which bears the hackneyed title of boudoir. But there was little enough of the fine lady’s boudoir in the simple morning-room of Madame de Ventadour. It was a lofty apartment, stored with books, and furnished, not without claim to grace, but with very small attention to luxury.

Valerie was not there ; and Maltravers, left alone, after a hasty glance around the chamber, leaned abstractedly against the wall, and forgot, alas ! all the admonitions of Cleveland. In a few moments the door opened, and Valerie entered. She was unusually pale, and Maltravers thought her eyelids betrayed the traces of tears. He was touched, and his heart smote him.

"I have kept you waiting, I fear," said Valerie, motioning him to a seat at a little distance from that on which she placed herself ; "but you will forgive me," she added, with a slight smile. Then, observing he was about to speak, she went on rapidly, "Hear me, Mr Maltravers—before you speak, hear me ! You uttered words last night that ought never to have been addressed to me. You professed to—love me."

"Professed !"

"Answer me," said Valerie, with abrupt energy, "not as man to woman, but as one human creature to another. From the bottom of your heart, from the core of your conscience, I call on you to speak the honest and the simple truth. Do you love me as your heart, your genius, must be capable of loving ?"

"I love you truly—passionately !" said Maltravers, surprised and confused, but still with enthusiasm in his musical voice and earnest eyes. Valerie gazed upon him as if she sought to penetrate into his soul. Maltravers went on. "Yes, Valerie, when we first met, you aroused a long dormant and delicious sentiment. But, since then, what deep emotions has that

sentiment called forth ! Your graceful intellect—your lovely thoughts, wise, yet womanly—have completed the conquest your face and voice began. Valerie, I love you. And you—you, Valerie—ah ! I do not deceive myself—you also——”

“Love !” interrupted Valerie, deeply blushing, but in a calm voice. “Ernest Maltravers, I do not deny it ; honestly and frankly I confess the fault. I have examined my heart during the whole of the last sleepless night, and I confess that I love you. Now, then, understand me ; we meet no more.”

“What !” said Maltravers, falling involuntarily at her feet, and seeking to detain her hand, which he seized. “What ! now, when you have given life a new charm, will you as suddenly blast it ? No, Valerie ; no, I will not listen to you.”

Madame de Ventadour rose and said, with a cold dignity—“Hear me calmly, or I quit the room ; and all I would now say rests for ever unspoken.”

Maltravers rose also, folded his arms haughtily, bit his lip, and stood erect, and confronting Valerie rather in the attitude of an accuser than a suppliant.

“Madame,” said he, gravely, “I will offend no more ; I will trust to your manner, since I may not believe your words.”

“You are cruel,” said Valerie, smiling mournfully ; “but so are all men. Now let me make myself understood. I was betrothed to Monsieur de Ventadour in my childhood. I did not see him till a month before we married. I had no choice. French girls have none !

We were wed. I had formed no other attachment. I was proud and vain : wealth, ambition, and social rank for a time satisfied my faculties and my heart. At length I grew restless and unhappy. I felt that the something of life was wanting. Monsieur de Ventadour's sister was the first to recommend to me the common resource of our sex—at least, in France—a lover. I was shocked and startled, for I belong to a family in which women are chaste and men brave. I began, however, to look around me, and examine the truth of the philosophy of vice. I found that no woman, who loved honestly and deeply an illicit lover, was happy. I found, too, the hideous profundity of Rochefoucauld's maxim, that a woman—I speak of French women—may live without a lover ; but, a lover once admitted, she never goes through life with *only* one. She is deserted ; she cannot bear the anguish and the solitude ; she fills up the void with a second idol. For her there is no longer a fall from virtue ; it is a gliding and involuntary descent from sin to sin, till old age comes on and leaves her without love and without respect. I reasoned calmly, for my passions did not blind my reason. I could not love the egotists around me. I resolved upon my career ; and now, in temptation, I will adhere to it. Virtue is my lover, my pride, my comfort, my life of life. Do you love me, and will you rob me of this treasure ? I saw you, and for the first time I felt a vague and intoxicating interest in another ; but I did not dream of

danger. As our acquaintance advanced I formed to myself a romantic and delightful vision. I would be your firmest, your truest friend ; your confidant, your adviser—perhaps in some epochs of life, your inspiration and your guide. I repeat that I foresaw no danger in your society. I felt myself a nobler and a better being. I felt more benevolent, more tolerant, more exalted. I saw life through the medium of purifying admiration for a gifted nature, and a profound and generous soul. I fancied we might be ever thus—each to each ;—one strengthened, assured, supported by the other. Nay, I even contemplated with pleasure the prospect of your future marriage with another—of loving your wife—of contributing with her to your happiness. My imagination made me forget that we are made of clay. Suddenly all these visions were dispelled—the fairy palace was overthrown, and I found myself awake, and on the brink of the abyss—you loved me, and in the moment of that fatal confession, the mask dropped from my soul, and I felt that you had become too dear to me. Be silent still, I implore you. I do not tell you of the emotions, of the struggles, through which I have passed the last few hours—the crisis of a life. I tell you only of the resolution I formed. I thought it due to you, nor unworthy of myself, to speak the truth. Perhaps it might be more womanly to conceal it; but my heart has something masculine in its nature. I have a great faith in your nobleness. I believe you can sympathise with whatever is best in human weakness—I tell you

that I love you—I throw myself upon your generosity. I beseech you to assist my own sense of right—to think well of me, to honour me—and to leave me!"

During the last part of this strange and frank avowal, Valerie's voice had grown inexpressibly touching: her tenderness forced itself into her manner; and when she ceased, her lip quivered—her tears, repressed by a violent effort, trembled in her eyes—her hands were clasped—her attitude was that of humility, not pride.

Maltravers stood perfectly spell-bound. At length he advanced, dropped on one knee, kissed her hand with an aspect and air of reverential homage, and turned to quit the room in silence; for he would not dare to trust himself to speak.

Valerie gazed at him in anxious alarm. "Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, "do not leave me yet; this is our last meeting—our last. Tell me, at least, that you understand me; that you see, if I am no weak fool, I am also no heartless coquette; tell me that you see I am not so hard as I have seemed; that I have not knowingly trifled with your happiness; that even now I am not selfish. Your love—I ask it no more! But your esteem—your good opinion. Oh, speak—speak, I implore you!"

"Valerie," said Maltravers, "if I was silent, it was because my heart was too full for words. You have raised all womanhood in my eyes. I did love you—I now venerate and adore. Your noble frankness, so unlike the irresolute frailty, the miserable wiles of your sex, has touched a chord in my heart that has

been mute for years. I leave you to think better of human nature. Oh !” he continued, “hasten to forget all of me that can cost you a pang. Let me still, in absence and in sadness, think that I retain in your friendship—let it be friendship only—the inspiration, the guide of which you spoke ; and if, hereafter, men shall name me with praise and honour, feel, Valerie, feel that I have comforted myself for the loss of your love by becoming worthy of your confidence—your esteem. Oh, that we had met earlier, when no barrier was between us !”

“ Go, go, *now*,” faltered Valerie, almost choked with her emotions ; “ may Heaven bless you ! Go !”

Maltravers muttered a few inaudible and incoherent words, and quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

The men of sense, those idols of the shallow, are very inferior to the men of Passions. It is the strong passions which, rescuing us from sloth, can alone impart to us that continuous and earnest attention necessary to great intellectual efforts.—*HELVETIUS*.

WHEN Ferrers returned that day from his customary ride, he was surprised to see the lobbies and hall of the apartment which he occupied in common with Maltravers littered with bags and *malles*, boxes and books, and Ernest's Swiss valet directing porters and waiters in a mosaic of French, English, and Italian.

“ Well ! ” said Lumley, “ and what is all this ? ”

“ Il signore va partir, sare, ah ! mon Dieu ! —*tout* of a sudden.”

“ O—h ! and where is he now ? ”

“ In his room, sare.”

Over the chaos strode Ferrers, and opening the door of his friend's dressing-room without ceremony, he saw Maltravers buried in a fauteuil, with his hands drooping on his knees, his head bent over his breast, and his whole attitude expressive of dejection and exhaustion.

“ What is the matter, my dear Ernest ? You have not killed a man in a duel ? ”

“ No.”

“ What then ? — Why are you going away, and whither ? ”

“ No matter ; leave me in peace.”

“ Friendly ! ” said Ferrers ; “ very friendly ! And what is to become of me—what companion am I to have in this cursed resort of antiquarians and lazzaroni ? You have no feeling, Mr Maltravers ! ”

“ Will you come with me, then ? ” said Maltravers, in vain endeavouring to rouse himself.

“ But where are you going ? ”

“ Anywhere ; to Paris—to London.”

“ No ; I have arranged my plans for the summer. I am not so rich as some people. I hate change : it is so expensive.”

“ But, my dear fellow——”

“ Is this fair dealing with me ? ” continued Lumley, who, for once in his life, was really angry. “ If I were an old coat you had worn for five years, you could not throw me off with more nonchalance.”

“ Ferrers, forgive me. My honour is concerned. I must leave this place. I trust you will remain my guest here, though in the absence of your host. You know that I have engaged the apartments for the next three months.”

“ Humph ! ” said Ferrers ; “ as that is the case, I may as well stay here. But why so secret ? Have you seduced Madame de Ventadour, or has her wise husband his suspicions ? Hein, hein ! ”

Maltravers smothered his disgust at this coarseness ;

and, perhaps, there is no greater trial of temper than in a *he* friend's gross remarks upon the connections of the heart.

"Ferrers," said he, "if you care for me, breathe not a word disrespectful to Madame de Ventadour: she is an angel!"

"But why leave Naples?"

"Trouble me no more."

"Good-day, sir," said Ferrers, highly offended, and he stalked out of the chamber; nor did Ernest see him again before his departure.

It was late that evening when Maltravers found himself alone in his carriage, pursuing by starlight the ancient and melancholy road to Mola di Gaëta.

His solitude was a luxury to Maltravers; he felt an inexpressible sense of release to be freed from Ferrers. The hard sense, the unpliant, though humorous imperiousness, the animal sensuality of his companion would have been a torture to him in his present state of mind.

The next morning, when he rose, the orange blossoms of Mola di Gaëta were sweet beneath the window of the inn where he rested. It was now the early spring, and the freshness of the odour, the breathing health of earth and air, it is impossible to describe. Italy itself boasts few spots more lovely than that same Mola di Gaëta—nor does that halcyon sea wear, even at Naples or Sorrento, a more bland and enchanting smile.

So, after a hasty and scarcely tasted breakfast, Mal-

travers strolled through the orange groves, and gained the beach ; and there, stretched at idle length by the murmuring waves, he resigned himself to thought, and endeavoured, for the first time since his parting with Valerie, to collect and examine the state of his mind and feelings. Maltravers, to his own surprise, did not find himself so unhappy as he had expected. On the contrary, a soft and almost delicious sentiment, which he could not well define, floated over all his memories of the beautiful Frenchwoman. Perhaps the secret was, that while his pride was not mortified, his conscience was not galled—perhaps, also, he had not loved Valerie so deeply as he had imagined. The confession and the separation had happily come before her presence had grown—*the want of a life*. As it was, he felt as if, by some holy and mystic sacrifice, he had been made reconciled to himself and mankind. He woke to a juster and higher appreciation of human nature, and of woman's nature in especial. He had found honesty and truth, where he might least have expected it—in a woman of a court—in a woman surrounded by vicious and frivolous circles—in a woman who had nothing in the opinion of her friends, her country, her own husband, the social system in which she moved, to keep her from the concessions of frailty—in a woman of the world—a woman of Paris !—yes, it was his very disappointment that drove away the fogs and vapours that, arising from the marshes of the great world, had gradually settled round his soul. Valerie de Ventadour

had taught him not to despise her sex, not to judge by appearances, not to sicken of a low and a hypocritical world. He looked in his heart for the love of Valerie, and he found there the love of Virtue. Thus, as he turned his eyes inward, did he gradually awaken to a sense of the true impressions engraved there. And he felt the bitterest drop of the deep fountains was not sorrow for himself, but for her. What pangs must that high spirit have endured ere it could have submitted to the avowal it had made ! Yet, even in this affliction, he found at last a solace. A mind so strong could support and heal the weakness of the heart. He felt that Valerie de Ventadour was not a woman to pine away in the unresisted indulgence of morbid and unholy emotions. He could not flatter himself that she would not seek to eradicate a love she repented ; and he sighed with a natural selfishness, when he owned also that sooner or later she would succeed. “But be it so,” said he, half aloud—“I will prepare my heart to rejoice when I learn that she remembers me only as a friend. Next to the bliss of her love is the pride of her esteem.”

Such was the sentiment with which his reveries closed —and with every league that bore him further from the south, the sentiment grew strengthened and confirmed.

Ernest Maltravers felt that there is in the Affections themselves so much to purify and exalt, that even an erring love, conceived without a cold design, and (when its nature is fairly understood) wrestled against with a

noble spirit, leaves the heart more tolerant and tender, and the mind more settled and enlarged. The philosophy limited to the reason puts into motion the automata of the closet—but to those who have the world for a stage, and who find their hearts are the great actors, experience and wisdom must be wrought from the Philosophy of the Passions.

BOOK III.

⁷Ω ^τπόλλων οὐ παντὶ φαείνεται, . . .

"Ος μιν δη, μέγας οὗτος.

CALLIM. *Ex Hymno in Apollinem.*

" Not to all men Apollo shows himself—
Who sees him—he is great!"

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears—soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

SHAKESPEARE.

BOAT SONG ON THE LAKE OF COMO.

1.

THE Beautiful Clime !—the Clime of Love !
Thou beautiful Italy !
Like a mother's eyes, the earnest skies
Ever have smiles for thee !
Not a flower that blows, not a beam that glows,
But what is in love with thee !

2.

The beautiful lake, the Larian lake ! *
Soft lake like a silver sea,
The Huntress Queen, with her nymphs of sheen,
Never had bath like thee.
See, the Lady of Night and her maids of light,
Even now are mid-deep in thee.

* The ancient name for Como.

3.

Beautiful child of the lonely hills,
 Ever blest may thy slumbers be !
 No mourner should tread by thy dreamy bed,
 No life bring a care to thee—
 Nay, soft to thy bed let the mourner tread—
 And life be a dream like thee !

Such, though uttered in the soft Italian tongue, and now imperfectly translated—such were the notes that floated one lovely evening in summer along the Lake of Como. The boat, from which came the song, drifted gently down the sparkling waters, towards the mossy banks of a lawn, whence on a little eminence gleamed the white walls of a villa, backed by vineyards. On that lawn stood a young and handsome woman, leaning on the arm of her husband, and listening to the song. But her delight was soon deepened into one of more personal interest, as the boatmen, nearing the banks, changed their measure, and she felt that the minstrelsy was in honour of herself.

SERENADE TO THE SONGSTRESS.

1.

CHORUS.

Softly—oh, soft ! let us rest on the oar,
 And vex not a billow that sighs to the shore :—
 For sacred the spot where the starry waves meet
 With the beach, where the breath of the citron is sweet ;
 There's a spell on the waves that now waft us along
 To the last of our Muses, the Spirit of Song.

RECITATIVE.

The Eagle of old renown,
 And the Lombard's iron crown,
 And Milan's mighty name are ours no more ;

But by this glassy water,
Harmonia's youngest daughter,
Still from the lightning saves one laurel to our shore.

2.

CHORUS.

They heard thee, Teresa, the Teuton, the Gaul,
Who have raised the rude thrones of the North on our fall ;
They heard thee, and bowed to the might of thy song,
Like love went thy steps o'er the hearts of the strong,
As the moon to the air, as the soul to the clay,
To the void of this earth was the breath of thy lay.

RECITATIVE.

Honour for aye to her
The bright interpreter
Of Art's great mysteries to the enchanted throng ;
While tyrants heard thy strains,
Sad Rome forgot her chains ;
The world the sword had lost was conquered back by song !

"Thou repentest, my Teresa, that thou hast renounced thy dazzling career for a dull home, and a husband old enough to be thy father," said the husband to the wife, with a smile that spoke confidence in the answer.

"Ah, no ! even this homage would have no music to me if thou didst not hear it."

She was a celebrated personage in Italy—the Signora Cesarini, now Madame de Montaigne ! Her earlier youth had been spent upon the stage, and her promise of vocal excellence had been most brilliant. But after a brief though splendid career, she married a French gentleman of good birth and fortune, retired from the stage, and spent her life alternately in the gay saloons of Paris and upon the banks of the dreamy Como, on

which her husband had purchased a small but beautiful villa. She still, however, exercised in private her fascinating art; to which—for she was a woman of singular accomplishment and talent—she added the gift of the improvisatrice. She had just returned for the summer to this lovely retreat, and a party of enthusiastic youths from Milan had sought the Lake of Como to welcome her arrival with the suitable homage of song and music. It is a charming relic, that custom of the brighter days of Italy; and I myself have listened, on the still waters of the same lake, to a similar greeting to a greater genius—the queenlike and unrivalled Pasta—the Semiramis of Song! And while my boat paused, and I caught something of the enthusiasm of the serenaders, the boatman touched me, and, pointing to a part of the lake on which the setting sun shed its rosiest smile, he said, “There, Signor, was drowned one of your countrymen—‘bellissimo uomo! che fu bello!’”—yes, there, in the pride of his promising youth, of his noble and almost godlike beauty, before the very windows—the very eyes—of his bride—the waves without a frown had swept over the idol of many hearts—the graceful and gallant Locke.* And

* Captain William Locke of the Life Guards (the only son of the accomplished Mr Locke of Norbury Park), distinguished by a character the most amiable, and by a personal beauty that certainly equalled, perhaps surpassed, the highest masterpiece of Grecian sculpture. He was returning, in a boat, from the town of Como, to his villa on the banks of the lake, when the boat was upset by one of the mysterious under-currents to which the lake is dangerously subjected, and he was drowned in sight of his bride, who was watching his return from the terrace or balcony of their home.

above his grave was the voluptuous sky, and over it floated the triumphant music. It was as the moral of the Roman poets—calling the living to a holiday over the oblivion of the dead.

As the boat now touched the bank, Madame de Montaigne accosted the musicians, thanked them with a sweet and unaffected earnestness for the compliment so delicately offered, and invited them ashore. The Milanese, who were six in number, accepted the invitation, and moored their boat to the jutting shore. It was then that Monsieur de Montaigne pointed out to the notice of his wife a boat, that had lingered under the shadow of a bank, tenanted by a young man, who had seemed to listen with rapt attention to the music, and who had once joined in the chorus (as it was twice repeated), with a voice so exquisitely attuned, and so rich in its deep power, that it had awakened the admiration even of the serenaders themselves.

"Does not that gentleman belong to your party?" De Montaigne asked of the Milanese.

"No, Signor, we know him not," was the answer; "his boat came unawares upon us as we were singing."

While this question and answer were going on, the young man had quitted his station, and his oars cut the glassy surface of the lake, just before the place where De Montaigne stood. With the courtesy of his country, the Frenchman lifted his hat; and by his gesture, arrested the eye and oar of the solitary rower.

"Will you honour us," he said, "by joining our little party?"

"It is a pleasure I covet too much to refuse," replied the boatman, with a slight foreign accent, and in another moment he was on shore. He was one of remarkable appearance. His long hair floated with a careless grace over a brow more calm and thoughtful than became his years; his manner was unusually quiet and self-collected, and not without a certain stateliness, rendered more striking by the height of his stature, a lordly contour of feature, and a serene but settled expression of melancholy in his eyes and smile. "You will easily believe," said he, "that, cold as my countrymen are esteemed (for you must have discovered already that I am an Englishman), I could not but share in the enthusiasm of those about me, when loitering near the very ground sacred to the inspiration. For the rest, I am residing for the present in yonder villa, opposite to your own; my name is Maltravers, and I am enchanted to think that I am no longer a personal stranger to one whose fame has already reached me."

Madame de Montaigne was flattered by something in the manner and tone of the Englishman, which said a great deal more than his words; and in a few minutes, beneath the influence of the happy Continental ease, the whole party seemed as if they had known each other for years. Wines, and fruits, and other simple and unpretending refreshments, were brought out and arranged on a rude table upon the grass, round which the guests seated themselves with their host

and hostess, and the clear moon shone over them, and the lake slept below in silver. It was a scene for a Boccaccio or a Claude.

The conversation naturally fell upon music : it is almost the only thing which Italians in general can be said to know—and even that knowledge comes to them, like Dogberry's reading and writing, by nature—for of music, as an *art*, the unprofessional amateurs know but little. As vain and arrogant of the last wreck of their national genius as the Romans of old were of the empire of all arts and arms, they look upon the harmonies of other lands as barbarous ; nor can they appreciate or understand appreciation of the mighty German music, which is the proper minstrelsy of a nation of *men*—a music of philosophy, of heroism, of the intellect and the imagination, beside which, the strains of modern Italy are indeed effeminate, fantastic, and artificially feeble. Rossini is the Canova of music, with much of the pretty, with nothing of the grand !

The little party talked, however, of music, with an animation and gusto that charmed the melancholy Maltravers, who for weeks had known no companion save his own thoughts, and with whom, at all times, enthusiasm for any art found a ready sympathy. He listened attentively, but said little ; and from time to time, whenever the conversation flagged, amused himself by examining his companions. The six Milanese had nothing remarkable in their countenances or in their talk ; they possessed the characteristic energy and volubility of their countrymen, with something of

the masculine dignity which distinguishes the Lombard from the Southern, and a little of the French polish, which the inhabitants of Milan seldom fail to contract. Their rank was evidently that of the middle class ; for Milan has a middle class, and one which promises great results hereafter. But they were no ways distinguished from a thousand other Milanese whom Maltravers had met in the walks and cafés of their noble city. The host was somewhat more interesting. He was a tall, handsome man, of about eight-and-forty, with a high forehead, and features strongly impressed with the sober character of thought. He had but little of the French vivacity in his manner ; and without looking at his countenance, you would still have felt insensibly that he was the oldest of the party. His wife was at least twenty years younger than himself, mirthful and playful as a child, but with a certain feminine and fascinating softness in her unrestrained gestures and sparkling gaiety, which seemed to subdue her natural joyousness into the form and method of conventional elegance. Dark hair carelessly arranged, an open forehead, large black laughing eyes, a small straight nose, a complexion just relieved from the olive by an evanescent yet perpetually recurring blush ; a round dimpled cheek, an exquisitely-shaped mouth with small pearly teeth, and a light and delicate figure a little below the ordinary standard, completed the picture of Madame de Montaigne.

“ Well,” said Signor Tirabuloschi, the most loquacious and sentimental of the guests, filling his glass ;

"these are hours to think of for the rest of life. But we cannot hope the Signora will long remember what we never can forget. Paris, says the French proverb, *est le paradis des femmes*; and, in paradise, I take it for granted, we recollect very little of what happened on earth."

"Oh!" said Madame de Montaigne, with a pretty musical laugh, "in Paris it is the rage to despise the frivolous life of cities, and to affect *des sentimens romanesques*. This is precisely the scene which our fine ladies and fine writers would die to talk of and to describe. Is it not so, *mon ami?*" and she turned affectionately to De Montaigne.

"True," replied he; "but you are not worthy of such a scene—you laugh at sentiment and romance."

"Only at French sentiment and the romance of the Chaussée d'Antin. You English," she continued, shaking her head at Maltravers, "have spoiled and corrupted us; we are not content to imitate you, we must excel you; we out-horror horror, and rush from the extravagant into the frantic!"

"The ferment of the new school is, perhaps, better than the stagnation of the old," said Maltravers. "Yet even you," addressing himself to the Italians, "who first in Petrarch, in Tasso, and in Ariosto, set to Europe the example of the Sentimental and the Romantic; who built among the very ruins of the classic school, amidst its Corinthian columns and sweeping arches, the spires and battlements of the Gothic—even you are deserting your old models and guiding litera-

ture into newer and wilder paths. 'Tis the way of the world—eternal progress is eternal change."

"Very possibly," said Signor Tirabuloschi, who understood nothing of what was said. "Nay, it is extremely profound; on reflection, it is beautiful—superb: you English are so—so—in short, it is admirable. Ugo Foscolo is a great genius—so is Monti; and as for Rossini—you know his last opera—*cosa stupenda!*"

Madame de Montaigne glanced at Maltravers, clapped her little hands, and laughed outright. Maltravers caught the contagion, and laughed also. But he hastened to repair the pedantic error he had committed of talking over the heads of the company. He took up the guitar which, among their musical instruments, the serenaders had brought, and after touching its chords for a few moments, said: "After all, Madame, in your society, and with this moonlit lake before us, we feel as if music were our best medium of conversation. Let us prevail upon these gentlemen to delight us once more."

"You forestall what I was going to ask," said the ex-singer; and Maltravers offered the guitar to Tirabuloschi, who was, in fact, dying to exhibit his powers again. He took the instrument with a slight grimace of modesty, and then—saying to Madame de Montaigne, "There is a song composed by a young friend of mine, which is much admired by the ladies, though, to me, it seems a little too sentimental"—sang the following stanzas (as good singers are wont to do) with as much feeling as if he could understand them:—

NIGHT AND LOVE.

When stars are in the quiet skies,
Then most I pine for thee ;
Bend on me, then, thy tender eyes,
As stars look on the sea !

For thoughts, like waves that glide by night,
Are stillest where they shine ;
Mine earthly love lies hushed in light,
Beneath the heaven of thine.

There is an hour when angels keep
Familiar watch on men ;
When coarser souls are wrapt in sleep,—
Sweet spirit, meet me then.

There is an hour when holy dreams,
Through slumber, fairest glide ;
And in that mystic hour, it seems
Thou shouldst be by my side.

The thoughts of thee too sacred are
For daylight's common beam ;—
I can but know thee as my star,
My angel, and my dream !

And now, the example set, and the praises of the fair hostess exciting general emulation, the guitar circled from hand to hand, and each of the Italians performed his part :—you might have fancied yourself at one of the old Greek feasts, with the lyre and the myrtle-branch going the round.

But both the Italians and the Englishmen felt the entertainment would be incomplete without hearing the celebrated vocalist and improvisatrice who presided over the little banquet ; and Madame de Montaigne, with a woman's tact, divined the general wish, and anticipated the request that was sure to be made. So

she took the guitar from the last singer, and turning to Maltravers, said, “ You have heard, of course, some of our more eminent improvisatori, and therefore if I ask you for a subject it will only be to prove to you that the talent is not general amongst the Italians.”

“ Ah !” said Maltravers, “ I have heard, indeed, some ugly old gentlemen with immense whiskers, and gestures of the most alarming ferocity, pour out their vehement impromptus ; but I have never yet listened to a young and a handsome lady. I shall only believe the inspiration when I hear it direct from the Muse.”

“ Well, I will do my best to deserve your compliments—you must give me the theme.”

Maltravers paused a moment, and suggested the Influence of Praise on Genius.

The improvisatrice nodded assent, and after a short prelude, broke forth into a wild and varied strain of verse, in a voice so exquisitely sweet, with a taste so accurate, and a feeling so deep, that the poetry sounded to the enchanted listeners like the language that Armida might have uttered. Yet the verses themselves, like all extemporaneous effusions, were of a nature both to pass from the memory and to defy transcription.

When Madame de Montaigne’s song ceased, no rapturous plaudits followed—the Italians were too affected by the science, Maltravers by the feeling, for the coarseness of ready praise ;—and ere that delighted silence which made the first impulse was broken, a new-comer, descending from the groves that clothed the ascent behind the house, was in the midst of the party.

"Ah, my dear brother," cried Madame de Montaigne, starting up, and hanging fondly on the arm of the stranger, "why have you lingered so long in the wood? You, so delicate! And how are you? how pale you seem!"

"It is but the reflection of the moonlight, Teresa," said the intruder. "I feel well." So saying, he scowled on the merry party, and turned as if to slink away.

"No, no," whispered Teresa, "you must stay a moment and be presented to my guests: there is an Englishman here whom you will like—who will *interest* you."

With that she almost dragged him forward, and introduced him to her guests. Signor Cesarini returned their salutations with a mixture of bashfulness and *hauteur*, half-awkward and half-graceful, and muttering some inaudible greeting, sank into a seat, and appeared instantly lost in reverie. Maltravers gazed upon him, and was pleased with his aspect—which, if not handsome, was strange and peculiar. He was extremely slight and thin—his cheeks hollow and colourless, with a profusion of black silken ringlets that almost descended to his shoulders. His eyes, deeply sunk into his head, were large and intensely brilliant; and a thin mustache, curling downward, gave an additional austerity to his mouth, which was closed with gloomy and half-sarcastic firmness. He was not dressed as people dress in general, but wore a frock of dark camlet, with a large shirt-collar turned down, and a narrow slip of black silk twisted rather than tied round his throat;

his nether garment fitted tight to his limbs, and a pair of half-hessians completed his costume. It was evident that the young man (and he was very young—perhaps about nineteen or twenty) indulged that coxcombry of the Picturesque which is the sign of a vainer mind than is the commoner coxcombry of the *Mode*.

It is astonishing how frequently it happens, that the introduction of a single intruder upon a social party is sufficient to destroy all the familiar harmony that existed there before. We see it even when the intruder is agreeable and communicative—but in the present instance, a ghost could scarcely have been a more unwelcoming or unwelcome visitor. The presence of this shy, speechless, supercilious-looking man, threw a damp over the whole group. The gay Tirabaloschi immediately discovered that it was time to depart—it had not struck any one before, but it certainly *was* late. The Italians began to bustle about, to collect their music, to make fine speeches and fine professions—to bow and to smile—to scramble into their boat, and to push off towards the inn at Como, where they had engaged their quarters for the night. As the boat glided away, and while two of them were employed at the oar, the remaining four took up their instruments and sang a parting glee. It was quite midnight—the hush of all things around had grown more intense and profound; there was a wonderful might of silence in the shining air and amidst the shadows thrown by the near banks and the distant hills over the water. So that as the music, chiming in with the oars, grew fainter and fainter,

it is impossible to describe the thrilling and magical effect it produced.

The party ashore did not speak ; there was a moisture, a grateful one, in the bright eyes of Teresa, as she leant upon the manly form of De Montaigne, for whom her attachment was, perhaps, yet more deep and pure for the difference of their ages. A girl who once loves a man, not indeed old, but much older than herself, loves him with such a *looking up* and venerating love ! Maltravers stood a little apart from the couple, on the edge of the shelving bank, with folded arms and thoughtful countenance. “How is it,” said he, unconscious that he was speaking half aloud, “that the commonest beings of the world should be able to give us a pleasure so unworldly ? What a contrast between those musicians and this music ! At this distance, their forms are so dimly seen, one might almost fancy the creators of those sweet sounds to be of another mould from us. Perhaps even thus the poetry of the Past rings on our ears—the deeper and the diviner, because removed from the clay which made the poets. O Art, Art ! how dost thou beautify and exalt us ! what is nature without thee !”

“You are a poet, Signor,” said a soft clear voice beside the soliloquist ; and Maltravers started to find that he had had unknowingly a listener in the young Cesarini.

“No,” said Maltravers, “I cull the flowers, I do not cultivate the soil.”

“And why not ?” said Cesarini, with abrupt energy ; “you are an Englishman—*you* have a public—you

have a country—you have a living stage, a breathing audience ; we Italians, have nothing but the Dead."

As he looked on the young man, Maltravers was surprised to see the sudden animation which glowed upon his pale features.

" You asked me a question I would fain put to you," said the Englishman, after a pause. " *You*, methinks, are a poet ? "

" I have fancied that I might be one. But poetry with us is a bird in the wilderness—it sings from an impulse—the song dies without a listener. O that I belonged to a *living* country,—France, England, Germany, America,—and not to the corruption of a dead giantess—for such is now the land of the ancient lyre."

" Let us meet again, and soon," said Maltravers, holding out his hand.

Cesarini hesitated a moment, and then accepted and returned the proffered salutation. Reserved as he was, something in Maltravers attracted him ; and, indeed, there was that in Ernest which fascinated most of those unhappy eccentrics who do not move in the common orbit of the world.

In a few moments more the Englishman had said farewell to the owners of the villa, and his light boat skimmed rapidly over the tide.

" What do you think of the *Inglese* ? " said Madame de Montaigne to her husband, as they turned towards the house. (They said not a word about the Milanese.)

" He has a noble bearing for one so young," said

the Frenchman, “and seems to have seen the world, and both to have profited and to have suffered by it.”

“He will prove an acquisition to our society here,” returned Teresa ; “he interests me ; and you, Castruccio ?” turning to seek for her brother ; but Cesarini had already, with his usual noiseless step, disappeared within the house.

“Alas, my poor brother !” she replied, “I cannot comprehend him. What does he desire ?”

“Fame !” replied De Montaigne, calmly. “It is a vain shadow ; no wonder that he disquiets himself in vain.”

CHAPTER II.

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To strictly meditate the thankless Muse;
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

MILTON's *Lycidas*.

THERE is nothing more salutary to active men than occasional intervals of repose—when we look within, instead of without, and examine almost *insensibly* (for I hold strict and conscious self-scrutiny a thing much rarer than we suspect) what we have done—what we are capable of doing. It is settling, as it were, a debtor and creditor account with the Past, before we plunge into new speculations. Such an interval of repose did Maltravers now enjoy. In utter solitude, so far as familiar companionship is concerned, he had for several weeks been making himself acquainted with his own character and mind. He read and thought much, but without any exact or defined object. I think it is Montaigne who says somewhere—"People talk about thinking—but for my part I never think, except when I sit down to write." I believe this is not a very common case, for people who don't write think as well as people who do; but connected, severe, well-devel-

oped thought, in contradistinction to vague meditation, must be connected with some tangible plan or object ; and, therefore, we must be either writing men or acting men, if we desire to test the logic, and unfold into symmetrical design the fused colours of our reasoning faculty. Maltravers did not yet feel this, but he was sensible of some intellectual want. His ideas, his memories, his dreams crowded thick and confused upon him ; he wished to arrange them in order, and he could not. He was overpowered by the unorganised affluence of his own imagination and intellect. He had often, even as a child, fancied that he was formed to do something in the world, but he had never steadily considered what it was to be, whether he was to become a man of books or a man of deeds. He had written poetry when it poured irresistibly from the fount of emotion within, but looked at his effusions with a cold and neglectful eye when the enthusiasm had passed away.

Maltravers was not much gnawed by the desire of fame—perhaps few men of real genius are, until artificially worked up to it. There is in a sound and correct intellect, with all its gifts fairly balanced, a calm consciousness of power, a certainty that when its strength is fairly put out, it must be to realise the usual result of strength. Men of second-rate faculties, on the contrary, are fretful and nervous, fidgeting after a celebrity which they do not estimate by their own talents, but by the talents of some one else. They see a tower, but are occupied only with measuring its shadow, and think their own height (which they never calculate) is

to cast as broad a one over the earth. It is the short man who is always throwing up his chin, and is as erect as a dart. The tall man stoops, and the strong man is not always using the dumb-bells.

Maltravers had not yet, then, the keen and sharp yearning for reputation ; he had not, as yet, tasted its sweets and bitters—fatal draught, which, *once* tasted, begets too often an insatiable thirst ! neither had he enemies and decriers whom he was desirous of abashing by merit. And that is a very ordinary cause for exertion in proud minds. He was, it is true, generally reputed clever, and fools were afraid of him : but as he actively interfered with no man's pretensions, so no man thought it necessary to call him a blockhead. At present, therefore, it was quietly and naturally that his mind was working its legitimate way to its destiny of exertion. He began idly and carelessly to note down his thoughts and impressions ; what was once put on the paper, begot new matter ; his ideas became more lucid to himself ; and the page grew a looking-glass, which presented the likeness of his own features. He began by writing with rapidity, and without method. He had no object but to please himself, and to find a vent for an overcharged spirit ; and, like most writings of the young, the matter was egotistical. We commence with the small nucleus of passion and experience, to widen the circle afterwards ; and perhaps the most extensive and universal masters of life and character have begun by being egotists. For there is in a man that has much in him, a wonderfully acute

and sensitive perception of his own existence. An imaginative and susceptible person has, indeed, ten times as much life as a dull fellow, “an’ he be Hercules.” He multiplies himself in a thousand objects, associates each with his own identity, lives in each, and almost looks upon the world with its infinite objects as a part of his individual being. Afterwards, as he tames down, he withdraws his forces into the citadel, but he still has a knowledge of, and an interest in, the land they once covered. He understands other people, for he has lived in other people—the dead and the living ;—fancied himself now Brutus and now Cæsar, and thought how *he* should act in almost every imaginable circumstance of life.

Thus, when he begins to paint human characters, essentially different from his own, his knowledge comes to him almost intuitively. It is as if he were describing the mansions in which he himself has formerly lodged, though for a short time. Hence, in great writers of History—of Romance—of the Drama—the *gusto* with which they paint their personages ; their creations are flesh and blood, not shadows or machines.

Maltravers was at first, then, an egotist in the matter of his rude and desultory sketches—in the manner, as I have said before, he was careless and negligent, as men will be who have not yet found that expression is an art. Still those wild and valueless essays—those rapt and secret confessions of his own heart—were a delight to him. He began to taste the transport, the

intoxication of an author. And oh, what a luxury is there in that first love of the Muse ! that process by which we give a palpable form to the long-intangible visions which have flitted across us ;—the beautiful ghost of the Ideal within us, which we invoke in the Gadara of our still closets, with the wand of the simple pen !

It was early noon, the day after he had formed his acquaintance with the De Montaignes, that Maltravers sat in his favourite room ;—the one he had selected for his study, from the many chambers of his large and solitary habitation. He sat in a recess by the open window, which looked on the lake ; and books were scattered on his table, and Maltravers was jotting down his criticisms on what he read, mingled with his impressions on what he saw. It is the pleasantest kind of composition—the note-book of a man who studies in retirement, who observes in society, who in all things can admire and feel. He was yet engaged in this easy task when Cesarini was announced, and the young brother of the fair Teresa entered his apartment.

“I have availed myself soon of your invitation,” said the Italian.

“I acknowledge the compliment,” replied Maltravers, pressing the hand shyly held out to him.

“I see you have been writing—I thought you were attached to literature. I read it in your countenance, I heard it in your voice,” said Cesarini, seating himself.

“I have been idly beguiling a very idle leisure, it is true,” said Maltravers.

"But you do not write for yourself alone—you have an eye to the great tribunals—Time and the Public."

"Not so, I assure you honestly," said Maltravers, smiling. "If you look at the books on my table, you will see that they are the great masterpieces of ancient and modern lore—these are studies that discourage tyros——"

"But inspire them."

"I do not think so. Models may form our taste as critics, but do not excite us to be authors. I fancy that our own emotions, our own sense of our destiny, make the great lever of the inert matter we accumulate. 'Look in thy heart and write,' said an old English writer,* who did not, however, practise what he preached. And you, Signor——"

"Am nothing, and would be something," said the young man, shortly and bitterly.

"And how does that wish not realise its object?"

"Merely because I am Italian," said Cesarini. "With us there is no literary public—no vast reading class—we have dilettanti and literati, and students, and even authors; but these make only a coterie, not a public. I have written, I have published; but no one listened to me. I am an author without readers."

"It is no uncommon case in England," said Maltravers.

The Italian continued—"I thought to live in the mouths of men—to stir up thoughts long dumb—to awaken the strings of the old lyre! In vain. Like

* Sir Philip Sidney.

the nightingale, I sing only to break my heart with a false and melancholy emulation of other notes."

"There are epochs in all countries," said Maltravers, gently, "when peculiar veins of literature are out of vogue, and when no genius can bring them into public notice. But you wisely said there were two tribunals—the Public and Time. You have still the last to appeal to. Your great Italian historians wrote for the unborn—their works not even published till their death. That indifference to living reputation has in it, to me, something of the sublime."

"I cannot imitate them—and they were not poets," said Cesarini, sharply. "To poets, praise is a necessary aliment ; neglect is death."

"My dear Signor Cesarini," said the Englishman, feelingly, "do not give way to these thoughts. There ought to be in a healthful ambition the stubborn stuff of persevering longevity ; it must live on, and hope for the day which comes slow or fast, to all whose labours deserve the goal."

"But perhaps mine do not. I sometimes fear so—it is a horrid thought."

"You are very young yet," said Maltravers ; "how few at your age ever sicken for fame ! That first step is, perhaps, the half way to the prize."

I am not sure that Ernest thought exactly as he spoke ; but it was the most delicate consolation to offer to a man whose abrupt frankness embarrassed and distressed him. The young man shook his head de-

spondingly. Maltravers tried to change the subject—he rose and moved to the balcony, which overhung the lake—he talked of the weather—he dwelt on the exquisite scenery—he pointed to the minute and more latent beauties around, with the eye and taste of one who had looked at Nature in her details. The poet grew more animated and cheerful ; he became even eloquent ; he quoted poetry and he talked it. Maltravers was more and more interested in him. He felt a curiosity to know if his talents equalled his aspirations : he hinted to Cesarini his wish to see his compositions—it was just what the young man desired. Poor Cesarini ! It was much to him to get a new listener, and he fondly imagined every honest listener must be a warm admirer. But with the coyness of his caste, he affected reluctance and hesitation ; he dallied with his own impatient yearnings. And Maltravers, to smooth his way, proposed an excursion on the lake.

“One of my men shall row,” said he ; “you shall recite to me, and I will be to you what the old house-keeper was to Molière.”

Maltravers had deep good-nature where he was touched, though he had not a superfluity of what is called good-humour, which floats on the surface and smiles on all alike. He had much of the milk of human kindness, but little of its oil.

The poet assented, and they were soon upon the lake. It was a sultry day, and it was noon ; so the

boat crept slowly along by the shadow of the shore, and Cesarini drew from his breast-pocket some manuscripts of small and beautiful writing. Who does not know the pains a young poet takes to bestow a fair dress on his darling rhymes !

Cesarini read well and feelingly. Everything was in favour of the reader. His own poetical countenance—his voice, his enthusiasm, half-suppressed—the pre-engaged interest of the auditor—the dreamy loveliness of the hour and scene—(for there is a great deal as to time in these things !) Maltravers listened intently. It is very difficult to judge of the exact merit of poetry in another language, even when we know that language well—so much is there in the untranslatable magic of expression, the little subtleties of style. But Maltravers, fresh, as he himself had said, from the study of great and original writers, could not but feel that he was listening to feeble though melodious mediocrity. It was the poetry of words, not things. He thought it cruel, however, to be hypercritical, and he uttered all the commonplaces of eulogium that occurred to him. The young man was enchanted : “And yet,” said he with a sigh, “I have no public. In England they would appreciate me.” Alas ! in England, at that moment, there were five hundred poets as young, as ardent, and yet more gifted, whose hearts beat with the same desire—whose nerves were broken by the same disappointments.

Maltravers found that his young friend would not

listen to any judgment not purely favourable. The archbishop in ‘*Gil Blas*’ was not more touchy upon any criticism that was not panegyric. Maltravers thought it a bad sign, but he recollect ed ‘*Gil Blas*,’ and prudently refrained from bringing on himself the benevolent wish of “beaucoup de bonheur et un peu plus de bon goût.” When Cesarini had finished his MS., he was anxious to conclude the excursion—he longed to be at home, and think over the admiration he had excited. But he left his poems with Maltravers, and getting on shore by the remains of Pliny’s villa, was soon out of sight.

Maltravers that evening read the poems with attention. His first opinion was confirmed. The young man wrote without knowledge. He had never felt the passions he painted, never been in the situations he described. There was no originality in him, for there was no experience: it was exquisite mechanism, his verse,—nothing more. It might well deceive him, for it could not but flatter his ear—and Tasso’s silver march rang not more musically than did the chiming stanzas of Castruccio Cesarini.

The perusal of this poetry and his conversation with the poet, threw Maltravers into a fit of deep musing. “This poor Cesarini may warn me against myself!” thought he. “Better hew wood and draw water, than attach ourselves devotedly to an art in which we have not the capacity to excel. . . . It is to throw away the healthful objects of life for a diseased dream,—worse

than the Rosicrucians, it is to make a sacrifice of all human beauty for the smile of a sylphid, that never visits us but in visions." Maltravers looked over his own compositions, and thrust them into the fire. He slept ill that night. His pride was a little dejected. He was like a beauty who has seen a caricature of herself.

CHAPTER III.

Still follow SENSE, of every art the Soul.

POPE : *Moral Essays*—Essay iv.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS spent much of his time with the family of De Montaigne. There is no period of life in which we are more accessible to the sentiment of friendship, than in the intervals of moral exhaustion which succeed to the disappointments of the passions. There is, then, something inviting in those gentler feelings which keep alive, but do not fever, the circulation of the affections. Maltravers looked with the benevolence of a brother upon the brilliant, versatile, and restless Teresa. She was the last person in the world he could have been in love with—for his nature, ardent, excitable, yet fastidious, required something of repose in the manners and temperament of the woman whom he could love, and Teresa scarcely knew what repose was. Whether playing with her children (and she had two lovely ones—the eldest six years old), or teasing her calm and meditative husband, or pouring out extempore verses, or rattling over airs which she never finished, on the guitar or piano—or making excursions on the lake—or, in short, in whatever occupation she appeared

as the Cynthia of the minute, she was always gay and mobile—never out of humour, never acknowledging a single care or cross in life—never susceptible of grief, save when her brother's delicate health or morbid temper saddened her atmosphere of sunshine. Even then, the sanguine elasticity of her mind and constitution quickly recovered from the depression ; and she persuaded herself that Castruccio would grow stronger every year, and ripen into a celebrated and happy man. Castruccio himself lived what romantic poetasters call the “life of a poet.” He loved to see the sun rise over the distant Alps—or the midnight moon sleeping on the lake. He spent half the day, and often half the night, in solitary rambles, weaving his airy rhymes, or indulging his gloomy reveries, and he thought loneliness made the element of a poet. Alas ! Dante, Alfieri, even Petrarch might have taught him that a poet must have intimate knowledge of men as well as mountains, if he desire to become the CREATOR. When Shelley, in one of his prefaces, boasts of being familiar with Alps and glaciers, and Heaven knows what, the critical artist cannot help wishing that he had been rather familiar with Fleet Street or the Strand. Perhaps, then, that remarkable genius might have been more capable of realising characters of flesh and blood, and have composed corporeal and consummate wholes, not confused and glittering fragments.

Though Ernest was attached to Teresa and deeply interested in Castruccio, it was De Montaigne for whom he experienced the higher and graver sentiment of

esteem. This Frenchman was one acquainted with a much larger world than that of the Coteries. He had served in the army, been employed with distinction in civil affairs, and was of that robust and healthful moral constitution which can bear with every variety of social life, and estimate calmly the balance of our mortal fortunes. Trial and experience had left him that true philosopher who is too wise to be an optimist, too just to be a misanthrope. He enjoyed life with sober judgment, and pursued the path most suited to himself, without declaring it to be the best for others. He was a little hard, perhaps, upon the errors that belong to weakness and conceit—not to those that have their source in great natures or generous thoughts. Among his characteristics was a profound admiration for England. His own country he half loved, yet half disdained. The impetuosity and levity of his compatriots displeased his sober and dignified notions. He could not forgive them (he was wont to say) for having made the two grand experiments of popular revolution and military despotism in vain. He sympathised neither with the young enthusiasts who desired a republic, without well knowing the numerous strata of habits and customs upon which that fabric, if designed for permanence, should be built—nor with the uneducated and fierce chivalry that longed for a restoration of the warrior empire—nor with the dull and arrogant bigots who connected all ideas of order and government with the ill-starred and worn-out dynasty of the Bourbons. In fact, GOOD SENSE was with him the *principium et*

fons of all theories and all practice. And it was this quality that attached him to the English. His philosophy on this head was rather curious.

“Good sense,” said he one day to Maltravers, as they were walking to and fro at De Montaigne’s villa, by the margin of the lake, “is not a merely intellectual attribute ; it is rather the result of a just equilibrium of all our faculties, spiritual and moral. The dishonest, or the toys of their own passions, may have genius ; but they rarely, if ever, have good sense in the conduct of life. They may often win large prizes, but it is by a game of chance, not skill. But the man whom I perceive walking an honourable and upright career—just to others, and also to himself (for we owe justice to ourselves—to the care of our fortunes, our character—to the management of our passions)—is a more dignified representative of his Maker than the mere child of genius. Of such a man, we say he has GOOD SENSE ; yes, but he has also integrity, self-respect, and self-denial. A thousand trials which his sense braves and conquers, are temptations also to his probity—his temper—in a word, to all the many sides of his complicated nature. Now, I do not think he will have this *good sense* any more than a drunkard will have strong nerves, unless he be in the constant habit of keeping his mind clear from the intoxication of envy, vanity, and the various emotions that dupe and mislead us. Good sense is not, therefore, an abstract quality or a solitary talent ; but it is the natural result of the habit of thinking justly, and therefore seeing clearly, and is as

different from the sagacity that belongs to a diplomatist or attorney, as the philosophy of Socrates differed from the rhetoric of Gorgias. As a mass of individual excellences make up this attribute in a man, so a mass of such men thus characterised give a character to a nation. Your England is, therefore, renowned for its good sense; but it is renowned also for the excellences which accompany strong sense in an individual, high honesty and faith in its dealings, a warm love of justice and fair play, a general freedom from the violent crimes common on the Continent, and the energetic perseverance in enterprise once commenced, which results from a bold and healthful disposition."

"Our Wars, our Debt——" began Maltravers.

"Pardon me," interrupted De Montaigne, "I am speaking of your People, not of your Government. A government is often a very unfair representative of a nation. But even in the wars you allude to, if you examine, you will generally find them originate in the love of justice (which is the basis of good sense), not from any insane desire of conquest or glory. A man, however sensible, must have a heart in his bosom, and a great nation cannot be a piece of selfish clockwork. Suppose you and I are sensible, prudent men, and we see in a crowd one violent fellow unjustly knocking another on the head, we should be brutes, not men, if we did not interfere with the savage; but if we thrust ourselves into a crowd with a large bludgeon, and belabour our neighbours, with the hope that the spectators would cry, 'See what a bold, strong fellow that is!'

then we should be only playing the madman from the motive of the coxcomb. I fear you will find, in the military history of the French and English, the application of my parable."

" Yet still, I confess, there is a gallantry, and a nobleman-like and Norman spirit in the whole French nation, which make me forgive many of their excesses, and think they are destined for great purposes, when experience shall have sobered their hot blood. Some nations, as some men, are slow in arriving at maturity ; others seem men in their cradle. The English, thanks to their sturdy Saxon origin, elevated, not depressed, by the Norman infusion, never were children. The difference is striking, when you regard the representatives of both in their great men—whether writers or active citizens."

" Yes," said De Montaigne, " in Milton and Cromwell there is nothing of the brilliant child. I cannot say as much for Voltaire or Napoleon. Even Richelieu, the manliest of our statesmen, had so much of the French infant in him as to fancy himself a *beau garçon*, a gallant, a wit, and a poet. As for the Racine school of writers, they were not out of the leading-strings of imitation—cold copyists of a pseudo-classic—in which they saw the form, and never caught the spirit. What so little Roman, Greek, Hebrew, as their Roman, Greek, and Hebrew dramas ? Your rude Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar—even his Troilus and Cressida—have the ancient spirit, precisely as they are imitations of nothing ancient. But our Frenchmen copied the giant images of

old, just as the school-girl copies a drawing, by holding it up to the window, and tracing the lines on silver-paper."

"But your new writers—De Staël—Chateaubriand?" *

"I find no fault with the sentimentalists," answered the severe critic, "than that of exceeding feebleness—they have no bone and muscle in their genius—all is flaccid and rotund in its feminine symmetry. They seem to think that vigour consists in florid phrases and little aphorisms, and delineate all the mighty tempests of the human heart with the polished prettiness of a miniature-painter on ivory. No!—these two are children of another kind—affected, tricked-out, well-dressed children—very clever, very precocious—but children still. Their whinings, and their sentimentalities, and their egotism, and their vanity, cannot interest masculine beings who know what life and its stern objects are."

"Your brother-in-law," said Maltravers, with a slight smile, "must find in you a discouraging censor."

"My poor Castruccio," replied De Montaigne, with a half-sigh; "he is one of those victims whom I believe to be more common than we dream of—men whose aspirations are above their powers. I agree with a great German writer, that in the first walks of

* At the time of this conversation, the later school, adorned by Victor Hugo—who, with notions of Art elaborately wrong, is still a man of extraordinary genius—had not risen into its present equivocal reputation.

Art no man has a right to enter, unless he is convinced that he has strength and speed for the goal. Castruccio might be an amiable member of society, nay, an able and useful man, if he would apply the powers he possesses to the rewards they may obtain. He has talent enough to win him reputation in any profession but that of a poet."

"But authors who obtain immortality are not always first-rate."

"First-rate in their way, I suspect ; even if that way be false or trivial. They must be connected with the *history* of their literature ; you must be able to say of them, 'In this school, be it bad or good, they exerted such and such an influence ;' in a word, they must form a link in the great chain of a nation's authors, which may be afterwards forgotten by the superficial, but without which the chain would be incomplete. And thus, if not first-rate for all time, they have been first-rate in their own day. But Castruccio is only the echo of others—he can neither found a school nor ruin one. Yet this," again added De Montaigne after a pause—"this melancholy malady in my brother-in-law would cure itself, perhaps, if he were not Italian. In your animated and bustling country, after sufficient disappointment as a poet, he would glide into some other calling, and his vanity and craving for effect would find a rational and manly outlet. But in Italy, what can a clever man do, if he is not a poet or a robber ? If he love his country, that crime is enough to unfit him for civil employment, and his mind cannot

stir a step in the bold channels of speculation without falling foul of the Austrian or the Pope. No ; the best I can hope for Castruccio is, that he will end in an antiquary, and dispute about ruins with the Romans. Better that than mediocre poetry."

Maltravers was silent and thoughtful. Strange to say, De Montaigne's views did not discourage his own new and secret ardour for intellectual triumphs ; not because he felt that he was now able to achieve them, but because he felt the iron of his own nature, and knew that a man who *has* iron in his nature must ultimately hit upon some way of shaping the metal into use.

The host and guest were now joined by Castruccio himself—silent and gloomy, as indeed he usually was, especially in the presence of De Montaigne, with whom he felt his "self-love" wounded ; for though he longed to despise his hard brother-in-law, the young poet was compelled to acknowledge that De Montaigne was not a man to be despised.

Maltravers dined with the De Montaignes, and spent the evening with them. He could not but observe that Castruccio, who affected in his verses the softest sentiments—who was, indeed, by original nature, tender and gentle—had become so completely warped by that worst of all mental vices—the eternally pondering on his own excellences, talents, mortifications, and ill-usage, that he never contributed to the gratification of those around him ; he had none of the little arts of social benevo-

lence, none of the playful youth of disposition which usually belongs to the good-hearted, and for which men of a master-genius, however elevated their studies, however stern or reserved to the vulgar world, are commonly noticeable amidst the friends they love, or in the home they adorn. Occupied with one dream, centred in self, the young Italian was sullen and morose to all who did not sympathise with his own morbid fancies. From the children—the sister—the friend—the whole living earth, he fled to a poem on Solitude, or stanzas upon Fame. Maltravers said to himself, “I will never be an author—I will never sigh for renown—if I am to purchase shadows at such a price !”

CHAPTER IV.

It cannot be too deeply impressed on the mind, that application is the price to be paid for mental acquisitions, and that it is as absurd to expect them without it, as to hope for a harvest where we have not sown the seed.

In everything we do, we may be possibly laying a train of consequences, the operation of which may terminate only with our existence.

BAILEY, *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions.*

TIME passed, and autumn was far advanced towards winter ; still Maltravers lingered at Como. He saw little of any other family than that of the De Montaignes, and the greater part of his time was necessarily spent alone. His occupation continued to be that of making experiments of his own powers, and these gradually became bolder and more comprehensive. He took care, however, not to show his “Diversions of Como” to his new friends : he wanted no audience—he dreamt of no Public ; he desired merely to practise his own mind. He became aware, of his own accord, as he proceeded, that a man can neither study with much depth, nor compose with much art, unless he has some definite object before him ; in the first, some one branch of knowledge to master ; in the last, some one conception to work out. Maltravers fell back upon his boyish passion for metaphysical speculation ; but with what

different results did he now wrestle with the subtle schoolmen, now that he had practically known mankind ! How insensibly new lights broke in upon him, as he threaded the labyrinth of cause and effect, by which we seek to arrive at that curious and biform monster—our own nature. His mind became saturated, as it were, with these profound studies and meditations ; and when at length he paused from them, he felt as if he had not been living in solitude, but had gone through a process of action in the busy world : so much juster, so much clearer, had become his knowledge of himself and others. But though these researches coloured, they did not limit his intellectual pursuits. Poetry and the lighter letters became to him not merely a relaxation, but a critical and thoughtful study. He delighted to penetrate into the causes that have made the airy webs spun by men's fancies so permanent and powerful in their influence over the hard, work-day world. And what a lovely scene—what a sky—what an air wherein to commence the projects of that ambition which seeks to establish an empire in the hearts and memories of mankind ! I believe it has a great effect on the future labours of a writer—the place where he first dreams that it is his destiny to write !

From these pursuits Ernest was aroused by another letter from Cleveland. His kind friend had been disappointed and vexed that Maltravers did not follow his advice, and return to England. He had shown his displeasure by not answering Ernest's letter of excuses ;

but lately he had been seized with a dangerous illness which reduced him to the brink of the grave ; and with a heart softened by the exhaustion of the frame, he now wrote in the first moments of convalescence to Maltravers, informing him of his attack and danger, and once more urging him to return. The thought that Cleveland—the dear, kind, gentle guardian of his youth—had been near unto death, that he might never more have hung upon that fostering hand, nor replied to that paternal voice, smote Ernest with terror and remorse. He resolved instantly to return to England, and made his preparations accordingly.

He went to take leave of the De Montaignes. Teresa was trying to teach her first-born to read ;—and, seated by the open window of the villa, in her neat, not precise, deshabille—with the little boy's delicate, yet bold and healthy countenance looking up fearlessly at hers, while she was endeavouring to initiate him, half gravely, half laughingly, into the mysteries of monosyllables, the pretty boy and the fair young mother made a delightful picture. De Montaigne was reading the Essays of his celebrated namesake, in whom he boasted, I know not with what justice, to claim an ancestor. From time to time he looked from the page to take a glance at the progress of his heir, and keep up with the march of intellect. But he did not interfere with the maternal lecture ; he was wise enough to know that there is a kind of sympathy between a child and a mother, which is worth all the grave superiority of a father in making learning palatable to young years.

He was far too clever a man not to despise all the systems of forcing infants under knowledge-frames, which are the present fashion. He knew that philosophers never made a greater mistake than in insisting so much upon beginning abstract education from the cradle. It is quite enough to attend to an infant's temper, and correct that cursed predilection for telling fibs, which falsifies all Dr Reid's absurd theory about innate propensities to truth, and makes the prevailing epidemic of the nursery. Above all, what advantage ever compensates for hurting a child's health, or breaking his spirit ? Never let him learn, more than you can help it, the crushing bitterness of fear. A bold child who looks you in the face speaks the truth and shames the devil ; that is the stuff of which to make good and brave—ay, and wise men !

Maltravers entered, unannounced, into this charming family party, and stood unobserved for a few moments by the open door. The little pupil was the first to perceive him, and, forgetful of monosyllables, ran to greet him ; for Maltravers, though gentle rather than gay, was a favourite with children, and his fair, calm, gracious countenance did more for him with them, than if, like Goldsmith's Burchell, his pockets had been filled with gingerbread and apples. “Ah, fie on you, Mr Maltravers!” cried Teresa, rising ; “you have blown away all the characters I have been endeavouring this last hour to imprint upon sand.”

“Not so, Signora,” said Maltravers, seating himself, and placing the child on his knee ; “my young friend

will set to work again with a greater gusto after this little break-in upon his labours."

" You will stay with us all day, I hope ? " said De Montaigne.

" Indeed," said Maltravers, " I am come to ask permission to do so, for to-morrow I depart for England."

" Is it possible ? " cried Teresa. " How sudden ! How we shall miss you ! Oh ! don't go. But perhaps you have bad news from England."

" I have news that summon me hence," replied Maltravers ; " my guardian and second father has been dangerously ill. I am uneasy about him, and reproach myself for having forgotten him so long in your seductive society."

" I am really sorry to lose you," said De Montaigne, with greater warmth in his tones than in his words. " I hope heartily we shall meet again soon : you will come, perhaps, to Paris ? "

" Probably," said Maltravers ; " and you perhaps to England ? "

" Ah, how I should like it ! " exclaimed Teresa.

" No, you would not," said her husband ; " you would not like England at all ; you would call it *triste* beyond measure. It is one of those countries of which a native should be proud, but which has no amusement for a stranger, precisely because full of such serious and stirring occupations to the citizens. The pleasantest countries for strangers are the worst countries for natives (witness Italy), and *vice versa*."

Teresa shook her dark curls, and would not be convinced.

"And where is Castruccio?" asked Maltravers.

"In his boat on the lake," replied Teresa. "He will be inconsolable at your departure: you are the only person he can understand, or who understands him; the only person in Italy—I had almost said, in the whole world."

"Well, we shall meet at dinner," said Ernest; "meanwhile let me prevail on you to accompany me to the *Pliniana*. I wish to say farewell to that crystal spring."

Teresa, delighted at any excursion, readily consented.

"And I too, mamma," cried the child; "and my little sister?"

"Oh, certainly," said Maltravers, speaking for the parents.

So the party was soon ready, and they pushed off in the clear genial noontide (for November in Italy is as early as September in the North) across the sparkling and dimpled waters. The children prattled, and the grown-up people talked on a thousand matters. It was a pleasant day, that last day at Como! For the farewells of friendship have indeed something of the melancholy, but not the anguish, of those of love. Perhaps it would be better if we could get rid of love altogether. Life would go on smoother and happier without it. Friendship is the wine of existence, but love is the dram-drinking.

When they returned, they found Castruccio seated on the lawn. He did not appear so much dejected at the prospect of Ernest's departure as Teresa had anticipated ; for Castruccio Cesarini was a very jealous man, and he had lately been chagrined and discontented with seeing the delight that the De Montaignes took in Ernest's society.

"Why is this?" he often asked himself ; "why are they more pleased with this stranger's society than mine? My ideas are as fresh, as original ; I have as much genius, yet even my dry brother-in-law allows *his* talents, and predicts that *he* will be an eminent man ; while *I*—No!—one is not a prophet in one's own country!"

Unhappy young man ! his mind bore all the rank weeds of the morbid poetical character, and the weeds choked up the flowers that the soil, properly cultivated, should alone bear. Yet that crisis in life awaited Castruccio, in which a sensitive and poetical man is made or marred ; the crisis in which a sentiment is replaced by the passions—in which love for some real object gathers the scattered rays of the heart into a focus ; out of that ordeal he might pass a purer and manlier being—so Maltravers often hoped. Maltravers then little thought how closely connected with his own fate was to be that passage in the history of the Italian ! Castruccio contrived to take Maltravers aside, and as he led the Englishman through the wood that backed the mansion, he said, with some embarrassment, "You go, I suppose, to London ?"

"I shall pass through it—can I execute any commission for you?"

"Why, yes ; my poems !—I think of publishing them in England : your aristocracy cultivate the Italian letters ; and perhaps I may be read by the fair and noble—that is the proper audience of poets. For the vulgar herd—I disdain it!"

"My dear Castruccio, I will undertake to see your poems published in London, if you wish it : but do not be sanguine. In England we read little poetry, even in our own language, and we are shamefully indifferent to foreign literature."

"Yes, foreign literature generally, and you are right ; but *my* poems are of another kind. They must command attention in a polished and intelligent circle."

"Well ! let the experiment be tried ; you can let me have the poems when we part."

"I thank you," said Castruccio, in a joyous tone, pressing his friend's hand ; and for the rest of that evening he seemed an altered being ; he even caressed the children, and did not sneer at the grave conversation of his brother-in-law.

When Maltravers rose to depart, Castruccio gave him the packet ; and then, utterly engrossed with his own imagined futurity of fame, vanished from the room to indulge his reveries. He cared no longer for Maltravers—he had put him to use—he could not be sorry for his departure, for that departure was the Avatar of His appearance to a new world !

A small dull rain was falling, though at intervals the

stars broke through the unsettled clouds, and Teresa did not therefore venture from the house ; she presented her smooth cheek to the young guest to salute, pressed him by the hand, and bade him adieu with tears in her eyes. “ Ah ! ” said she, “ when we meet again, I hope you will be married—I shall love your wife dearly. There is no happiness like marriage and home ! ” and she looked with ingenuous tenderness at De Montaigne.

Maltravers sighed—his thoughts flew back to Alice. Where now was that lone and friendless girl, whose innocent love had once brightened a home for *him* ? He answered by a vague and mechanical commonplace, and quitted the room with De Montaigne, who insisted on seeing him depart. As they neared the lake, De Montaigne broke the silence.

“ My dear Maltravers,” he said, with a serious and thoughtful affection in his voice, “ we may not meet again for years. I have a warm interest in your happiness and career—yes, *career*—I repeat the word. I do not habitually seek to inspire young men with ambition. Enough for most of them to be good and honourable citizens. But in your case it is different. I see in you the earnest and meditative, not rash and overweening youth, which is usually productive of a distinguished manhood. Your mind is not yet settled, it is true ; but it is fast becoming clear and mellow from the first ferment of boyish dreams and passions. You have everything in your favour—competence, birth, connections ; and, above all, you are an Englishman ! You have a mighty stage, on which, it is true, you

cannot establish a footing without merit and without labour—so much the better ; in which strong and resolute rivals will urge you on to emulation, and then competition will task your keenest powers. Think what a glorious fate it is, to have an influence on the vast but ever-growing mind of such a country—to feel, when you retire from the busy scene, that you have played an unforgotten part—that you have been the medium, under God's great will, of circulating new ideas throughout the world—of upholding the glorious priesthood of the Honest and the Beautiful. This is the true ambition ; the desire of mere personal notoriety is vanity, not ambition. Do not then be lukewarm or supine. The trait I have observed in you," added the Frenchman, with a smile, "most prejudicial to your chances of distinction is, that you are *too* philosophical, too apt to *cui bono* all the exertions that interfere with the indolence of cultivated leisure. And you must not suppose, Maltravers, that an active career will be a path of roses. At present you have no enemies ; but the moment you attempt distinction, you will be abused, calumniated, reviled. You will be shocked at the wrath you excite, and sigh for your old obscurity, and consider, as Franklin has it, that 'you have paid too dear for your whistle.' But, in return for individual enemies, what a noble recompense to have made the Public itself your friend ; perhaps even Posterity your familiar ! Besides," added De Montaigne, with almost a religious solemnity in his voice, "there is a conscience of the head as well as of the heart, and in old age we feel as much remorse

if we have wasted our natural talents, as if we have perverted our natural virtues. The profound and exultant satisfaction with which a man who knows that he has not lived in vain—that he has entailed on the world an heirloom of instruction or delight—looks back upon departed struggles, is one of the happiest emotions of which the conscience can be capable. What, indeed, are the petty faults we commit as individuals, affecting but a narrow circle, ceasing with our own lives, to the incalculable and everlasting good we may produce as public men by one book or by one law? Depend upon it that the Almighty, who sums up all the good and all the evil done by his creatures in a just balance, will not judge the august benefactors of the world with the same severity as those drones of society, who have no great services to show in the eternal ledger, as a set-off to the indulgence of their small vices. These things rightly considered, Maltravers, you will have every inducement that can tempt a lofty mind and a pure ambition to awaken from the voluptuous indolence of the literary Sybarite, and contend worthily in the world's wide Altis for a great prize."

Maltravers never before felt so flattered—so stirred into high resolves. The stately eloquence, the fervid encouragement of this man, usually so cold and fastidious, roused him like the sound of a trumpet. He stopped short, his breath heaved thick, his cheek flushed. "De Montaigne," said he, "your words have cleared away a thousand doubts and scruples—they have gone right to my heart. For the first time I

understand what fame is—what the object, and what the reward of labour ! Visions, hopes, aspirations, I may have had before—for months a new spirit has been fluttering within me. I have felt the wings breaking from the shell. But all was confused, dim, uncertain. I doubted the wisdom of effort, with life so short, and the pleasures of youth so sweet. I now look no longer on life but as a part of the eternity to which I *feel* we were born ; and I recognise the solemn truth that our objects, to be worthy life, should be worthy of creatures in whom the living principle never is extinct. Farewell ! come joy or sorrow, failure or success, I will struggle to deserve your friendship."

Maltravers sprang into his boat, and the shades of night soon snatched him from the lingering gaze of De Montaigne.

BOOK IV.

*Ἐπὶ δὲ ξένῳ
Ναῖεις χθονὶ, τὰς ἀνάνδρου
Κοίτας ὀλέσασα λέκτρον
Τάλαινα.*

EURIP. *Med.* 442.

“ Strange is the land that holds thee, and thy couch
Is widowed of the loved one.”—*Translation by R. G.*

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

I, alas !
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years ;
And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope.

CENCI.

FROM accompanying Maltravers along the noiseless progress of mental education, we are now called awhile to cast our glances back at the ruder and harsher ordeal which Alice Darvil was ordained to pass. Along her path poetry shed no flowers, nor were her lonely steps towards the distant shrine at which her pilgrimage found its rest lighted by the mystic lamp of science, or guided by the thousand stars which are never dim in the heavens for those favoured eyes from which genius and fancy have removed many of the films of clay. Not along the aërial and exalted ways that wind far above the homes and business of common men—the solitary Alps of Spiritual Philosophy—wandered the desolate steps of the child of poverty and sorrow.

On the beaten and rugged highways of common life, with a weary heart, and with bleeding feet, she went her melancholy course. But the goal which is the great secret of life, the *summum arcanum* of all philosophy, whether the Practical or the Ideal, was, perhaps, no less attainable for that humble girl than for the elastic step and aspiring heart of him who thirsted after the Great, and almost believed in the Impossible.

We return to that dismal night in which Alice was torn from the roof of her lover. It was long before she recovered her consciousness of what had passed, and gained a full perception of the fearful revolution which had taken place in her destinies. It was then a grey and dreary morning twilight ; and the rude but covered vehicle which bore her was rolling along the deep ruts of an unfrequented road, winding among the unenclosed and mountainous wastes that, in England, usually betoken the neighbourhood of the sea. With a shudder, Alice looked round : Walters, her father's accomplice, lay extended at her feet, and his heavy breathing showed that he was fast asleep. Darvil himself was urging on the jaded and sorry horse, and his broad back was turned towards Alice ; the rain, from which, in his position, he was but ill protected by the awning, dripped dismally from his slouched hat ; and now, as he turned round, and his sinister and gloomy gaze rested upon the face of Alice, his bad countenance, rendered more haggard by the cold raw light of the cheerless dawn, completed the hideous picture of unveiled and ruffianly wretchedness.

"Ho, ho, Alley, so you are come to your senses," said he, with a kind of joyless grin. "I am glad of it, for I can have no fainting fine ladies with me. You have had a long holiday, Alley ; you must now learn once more to work for your poor father. Ah, you have been d—d sly ; but never mind the past—I forgive it. You must not run away again without my leave ; if you are fond of sweethearts, I won't balk you—but your old father must go shares, Alley."

Alice could hear no more : she covered her face with the cloak that had been thrown about her, and though she did not faint, her senses seemed to be locked and paralysed. By-and-by Walters woke, and the two men, heedless of her presence, conversed upon their plans. By degrees she recovered sufficient self-possession to listen, in the instinctive hope that some plan of escape might be suggested to her. But from what she could gather of the incoherent and various projects they discussed, one after another, disputing upon each with frightful oaths and scarce intelligible slang, she could only learn that it was resolved at all events to leave the district in which they were—but whither, seemed yet all undecided. The cart halted at last at a miserable-looking hut, which the signpost announced to be an inn that afforded good accommodation to travellers ; to which announcement was annexed the following epigrammatic distich :—

"Old Tom, he is the best of gin ;
Drink him once, and you'll drink him agin !"

The hovel stood so remote from all other habitations,

and the waste around was so bare of trees, and even shrubs, that Alice saw with despair that all hope of flight in such a place would be indeed a chimera. But to make assurance doubly sure, Darvil himself, lifting her from the cart, conducted her up a broken and unlighted staircase, into a sort of loft rather than a room, and, pushing her rudely in, turned the key upon her, and descended. The weather was cold, the livid damps hung upon the distained walls, and there was neither fire nor hearth ; but thinly clad as she was—her cloak and shawl her principal covering—she did not feel the cold, for her heart was more chilly than the airs of heaven. At noon an old woman brought her some food, which, consisting of fish and poached game, was better than might have been expected in such a place, and what would have been deemed a feast under her father's roof. With an inviting leer, the crone pointed to a pewter measure of raw spirits that accompanied the viands, and assured her, in a cracked and maudlin voice, that “ ‘Old Tom’ was a kinder friend than any of the young fellers ! ” This intrusion ended, Alice was again left alone till dusk, when Darvil entered with a bundle of clothes, such as are worn by the peasants of that primitive district of England.

“ There, Alley,” said he, “ put on this warm toggery ; finery won’t do now. We must leave no scent in the track ; the hounds are after us, my little blowen. Here’s a nice stuff gown for you, and a red cloak that would frighten a turkey-cock. As to the other cloak and shawl, don’t be afraid ; they shan’t go to the pop-

shop, but we'll take care of them against we get to some large town where there are young fellows with blunt in their pockets ; for you seem to have already found out that your face is your fortune, Alley. Come, make haste ; we must be starting. I shall come up for you in ten minutes. Pish ! don't be faint-hearted ; here, take 'Old Tom'—take it, I say. What ! you won't ? Well, here's to your health, and a better taste to you ! ”

And now, as the door once more closed upon Darvil, tears for the first time came to the relief of Alice. It was a woman's weakness that procured for her that woman's luxury. Those garments—they were Ernest's gift—Ernest's taste ; they were like the last relic of that delicious life which now seemed to have fled for ever. All traces of that life—of him, the loving, the protecting, the adored ; all trace of herself, as she had been re-created by love, was to be lost to her for ever. It was (as she had read somewhere, in the little elementary volumes that bounded her historic lore) like that last fatal ceremony in which those condemned for life to the mines of Siberia are clothed with the slave's livery, their past name and record eternally blotted out, and thrust into the vast wastes, from which even the mercy of despotism, should it ever reawaken, cannot recall them ; for all evidence of them—all individuality — all mark to distinguish them from the universal herd, is expunged from the world's calendar. She was still sobbing in vehement and unrestrained passion, when Darvil re-entered. “What ! not dressed yet ? ”

he exclaimed, in a voice of impatient rage ; “ harkye, this won’t do. If in two minutes you are not ready, I’ll send up John Walters to help you ; and he is a rough hand, I can tell you.”

This threat recalled Alice to herself. “ I will do as you wish,” said she, meekly.

“ Well, then, be quick,” said Darvil ; “ they are now putting the horse to. And mark me, girl, your father is running away from the gallows, and that thought does not make a man stand upon scruples. If you once attempt to give me the slip, or do or say anything that can bring the bulkies upon us—by the devil in hell—if, indeed, there be hell or devil—my knife shall become better acquainted with that throat—so look to it !”

And this was the father—this the condition—of her whose ear had for months drunk no other sound than the whispers of flattering love—the murmurs of Passion from the lips of Poetry.

They continued their journey till midnight ; they then arrived at an inn, little different from the last ; but here Alice was no longer consigned to solitude. In a long room, reeking with smoke, sat from twenty to thirty ruffians before a table, on which mugs and vessels of strong potations were formidably interspersed with sabres and pistols. They received Walters and Darvil with a shout of welcome, and would have crowded somewhat unceremoniously round Alice, if her father, whose well-known desperate and brutal ferocity made him a man to be respected in such an assembly, had not

said, sternly, “Hands off, messmates, and make way by the fire for my little girl—she is meat for your masters.”

So saying, he pushed Alice down into a huge chair in the chimney-nook, and, seating himself near her at the end of the table, hastened to turn the conversation.

“Well, captain,” said he, addressing a small thin man at the head of the table, “I and Walters have fairly cut and run — the land has a bad air for us, and we now want the sea-breeze to cure the rope fever. So, knowing this was your night, we have crowded sail, and here we are. You must give the girl there a lift, though I know you don’t like such lumber, and we’ll run ashore as soon as we can.”

“She seems a quiet little body,” replied the captain ; “and we would do more than that to oblige an old friend like you. In half an hour Oliver* puts on his nightcap, and we must then be off.”

“The sooner the better.”

The men now appeared to forget the presence of Alice, who sat faint with fatigue and exhaustion, for she had been too sick at heart to touch the food brought to her at their previous halting-place, gazing abstractedly upon the fire. Her father, before their departure, made her swallow some morsels of sea-biscuit, though each seemed to choke her ; and then, wrapped in a thick boat-cloak, she was placed in a small, well-built cutter ; and as the sea-winds whistled round her, the present cold and the past fatigues lulled her miserable heart into the arms of the charitable Sleep.

* The moon.

CHAPTER II.

You are once more a free woman ;
Here I discharge your bonds.

The Custom of the Country.

AND many were thy trials, poor child ; many that, were this book to germinate into volumes, more numerous than monk ever composed upon the lives of saint or martyr (though a hundred volumes contained the record of two years only in the life of St Anthony), it would be impossible to describe ! We may talk of the fidelity of books, but no man ever wrote even his own biography without being compelled to omit at least nine-tenths of the most important materials. What are three—what six volumes ? We live six volumes in a day ! Thought, emotion, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, how prolix would they be, if they might each tell their hourly tale ! But man's life itself is a brief epitome of that which is infinite and everlasting ; and his most accurate confessions are a miserable abridgment of a hurried and confused compendium !

It was about three months, or more, from the night in which Alice wept herself to sleep amongst those wild companions, when she contrived to escape from her

father's vigilant eye. They were then on the coast of Ireland. Darvil had separated himself from Walters—from his seafaring companions ; he had run through the greater part of the money his crimes had got together ; he began seriously to attempt putting into execution his horrible design of depending for support upon the sale of his daughter. Now Alice might have been moulded into sinful purposes before she knew Maltravers ; but from that hour her very error made her virtuous—she had comprehended, the moment she loved, what was meant by female honour ; and, by a sudden revelation, she had purchased modesty, delicacy of thought and soul, in the sacrifice of herself. Much of our morality (prudent and right upon system), with respect to the first false step of women, leads us, as we all know, into barbarous errors as to individual exceptions. Where, from pure and confiding love, that first false step has been taken, many a woman has been saved, in after-life, from a thousand temptations. The poor unfortunates who crowd our streets and theatres have rarely, in the first instance, been corrupted by love, but by poverty, and the contagion of circumstance and example. It is a miserable cant phrase to call them the victims of seduction ; they have been the victims of hunger, of vanity, of curiosity, of evil *female* counsels ; but the seduction of love hardly ever conducts to a *life* of vice. If a woman has once really loved, the beloved object makes an impenetrable barrier between her and other men ; their advances terrify and revolt—she would rather die than be unfaithful even

to a memory. Though man loves the sex, woman loves only the individual ; and the more she loves him, the more cold she is to the species. For the passion of woman is in the sentiment—the fancy—the heart. It rarely has much to do with the coarse images with which boys and old men—the inexperienced and the worn out—connect it.

But Alice, though her blood ran cold at her terrible father's language, saw in his very design the prospect of escape. In an hour of drunkenness he thrust her from the house, and stationed himself to watch her—it was in the city of Cork. She formed her resolution instantly—turned up a narrow street, and fled at full speed. Darvil endeavoured in vain to keep pace with her—his eyes dizzy, his steps reeling with intoxication. She heard his last curse dying from a distance on the air, and her fear winged her steps ; she paused at last, and found herself on the outskirts of the town :—She paused, overcome, and deadly faint ; and then, for the first time, she felt that a strange and new life was stirring within her own. She had long since known that she bore in her womb the unborn offspring of Maltravers, and that knowledge had made her struggle and live on. But now, the embryo had quickened into being—it moved—it appealed to her—a thing unseen, unknown ; but still it was a living creature appealing to a mother ! Oh, the thrill, half of ineffable tenderness, half of mysterious terror, at that moment !—What a new chapter in the life of woman did it not announce !—Now, then, she must be watchful over

herself—must guard against fatigue—must wrestle with despair. Solemn was the trust committed to her—the life of another—the child of the Adored. It was a summer night—she sat on a rude stone, the city on one side, with its lights and lamps ; the whitened fields beyond, with the moon and the stars above : and *above* she raised her streaming eyes, and she thought that God the Protector smiled upon her from the face of the sweet skies. So, after a pause and a silent prayer, she rose and resumed her way. When she was wearied she crept into a shed in a farmyard, and slept, for the first time for weeks, the calm sleep of security and hope.

CHAPTER III.

How like a prodigal doth she return,
With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails !

Merchant of Venice.

Mer. What are these ?

Uncle. The tenants.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *Wit without Money.*

IT was just two years from the night in which Alice had been torn from the cottage ; and at that time Maltravers was wandering amongst the ruins of ancient Egypt, when, upon the very lawn where Alice and her lover had so often loitered hand in hand, a gay party of children and young people were assembled. The cottage had been purchased by an opulent and retired manufacturer. He had raised the low thatched roof another storey high—and blue slate had replaced the thatch — and the pretty verandahs overgrown with creepers had been taken down, because Mrs Hobbs thought they gave the rooms a dull look ; and the little rustic doorway had been replaced by four Ionic pillars in stucco ; and a new dining-room, twenty-two feet by eighteen, had been built out at one wing, and a new drawing-room had been built over the new dining-room. And the poor little cottage looked quite

grand and villa-like. The fountain had been taken away, because it made the house damp ; and there was such a broad carriage-drive from the gate to the house ! The gate was no longer the modest green wooden gate, ever ajar with its easy latch ; but a tall, cast-iron, well-locked gate, between two pillars to match the porch. And on one of the gates was a brass plate, on which was graven, “ Hobbs’s Lodge—Ring the bell.” The lesser Hobbses and the bigger Hobbses were all on the lawn—many of them fresh from school—for it was the half-holiday of a Saturday afternoon. There was mirth, and noise, and shouting, and whooping, and the respectable old couple looked calmly on. Hobbs the father smoking his pipe (alas ! it was not the dear meerschaum) ; Hobbs the mother talking to her eldest daughter (a fine young woman, three months married, for love, to a poor man) upon the proper number of days that a leg of mutton (weight ten pounds) should be made to last. “ Always, my dear, have large joints ; they are much the most saving. Let me see—what a noise the boys do make ! No, my love, the ball’s not here.”

“ Mamma, it is under your petticoats.”

“ La, child, how naughty you are ! ”

“ Holla, you sir ! it’s my turn to go in now. Biddy, wait—girls have no innings—girls only fag out.”

“ Bob, you cheat.”

“ Pa, Ned says I cheat.”

“ Very likely, my dear ; you are to be a lawyer.”

“ Where was I, my dear ? ” resumed Mrs Hobbs, re-

settling herself, and readjusting the invaded petticoats. “ Oh, about the leg of mutton !—yes, large joints are the best—the second day a nice hash, with dumplings ; the third, broil the bone—your husband is sure to like broiled bones !—and then keep the scraps for Saturday’s pie ;—you know, my dear, your father and I were worse off than you when we began. But now we have everything that is handsome about us—nothing like management. Saturday pies are very nice things, and then you start clear with your joint on Sunday. A good wife like you should never neglect the Saturday’s pie !”

“ Yes,” said the bride, mournfully ; “ but Mr Tiddy does not like pies.”

“ Not like pies ! that’s very odd—Mr Hobbs likes pies—perhaps you don’t have the crust made thick eno’. Howsomever, you can make it up to him with a pudding. A wife should always study her husband’s tastes—what is a man’s home without love ? Still a husband ought not to be aggravating, and dislike pie on a Saturday !”

“ Holla ! I say, ma, do you see that ’ere gypsy ? I shall go and have my fortune told.”

“ And I—and I !”

“ Lor, if there ben’t a trumper !” cried Mr Hobbs, rising indignantly ; “ what can the parish be about ? ”

The object of these latter remarks, filial and paternal, was a young woman in a worn, threadbare cloak, with her face pressed to the open-work of the gate, and looking wistfully—oh, how wistfully !—within. The

children eagerly ran up to her, but they involuntarily slackened their steps when they drew near, for she was evidently not what they had taken her for. No gypsy hues darkened the pale, thin, delicate cheek—no gypsy leer lurked in those large blue and streaming eyes—no gypsy effrontery bronzed that candid and childish brow. As she thus pressed her countenance with convulsive eagerness against the cold bars, the young people caught the contagion of inexpressible and half-fearful sadness—they approached almost respectfully—“Do you want anything here?” said the eldest and boldest of the boys.

“I—I—surely this is Dale Cottage ?”

“It was Dale Cottage, it is Hobbs’s Lodge now ; can’t you read ?” said the heir of the Hobbses’ honours, losing, in contempt at the girl’s ignorance, his first impression of sympathy.

“And—and—Mr Butler, is he gone *too* ?”

Poor child ! she spoke as if the cottage was gone, not improved ; the Ionic portico had no charm for her !

“Butler!—no such person lives here. Pa, do you know where Mr Butler lives ?”

Pa was now moving up to the place of conference the slow artillery of his fair round belly and portly calves. “Butler, no—I know nothing of such a name—no Mr Butler lives here. Go along with you—ain’t you ashamed to beg ?”

“No Mr Butler !” said the girl, gasping for breath, and clinging to the gate for support. “Are you sure, sir ?”

"Sure, yes!—what do you want with him?"

"Oh, papa, she looks faint!" said one of the *girls*, deprecatingly—"do let her have something to eat; I'm sure she's hungry."

Mr Hobbs looked angry; he had often been taken in, and no rich man likes beggars. Generally speaking, the rich man is in the right. But then Mr Hobbs turned to the suspected trampers sorrowful face and then to his fair pretty child—and his good angel whispered something to Mr Hobbs's heart—and he said, after a pause, "Heaven forbid that we should not feel for a poor fellow-creature not so well to do as ourselves! Come in, my lass, and have a morsel to eat."

The girl did not seem to hear him, and he repeated the invitation, approaching to unlock the gate.

"No, sir," said she, then; "no, I thank you. I could not come in now. I could not eat *here*. But tell me, sir, I implore you, can you not even guess where I may find Mr Butler?"

"Butler!" said Mrs Hobbs, whom curiosity had now drawn to the spot. "I remember that was the name of the gentleman who hired the place, and was robbed."

"Robbed!" said Mr Hobbs, falling back and re-locking the gate—"and the new tea-pot just come home," he muttered inly.—"Come, be off, child—be off; we know nothing of your Mr Butlers."

The young woman looked wildly in his face, cast a hurried glance over the altered spot, and then, with a kind of shiver, as if the wind had smitten her delicate

form too rudely, she drew her cloak more closely round her shoulders, and, without saying another word, moved away. The party looked after her as, with trembling steps, she passed down the road, and all felt that pang of shame which is common to the human heart at the sight of a distress it has not sought to soothe. But this feeling vanished at once from the breast of Mrs and Mr Hobbs, when they saw the girl stop where a turn of the road brought the gate before her eyes ; and for the first time they perceived, what the worn cloak had hitherto concealed, that the poor young thing bore an infant in her arms. She halted, she gazed fondly back. Even at that distance the despair of her eyes was visible ; and then, as she pressed her lips to the infant's brow, they heard a convulsive sob—they saw her turn away, and she was gone !

"Well, I declare !" said Mrs Hobbs.

"News for the parish," said Mr Hobbs ; "and she so young too !—what a shame !"

"The girls about here are very bad nowadays, Jenny," said the mother to the bride.

"I see now why she wanted Mr Butler," quoth Hobbs, with a knowing wink—"the slut has come to swear !"

And it was for this that Alice had supported her strength—her courage—during the sharp pangs of childbirth ; during a severe and crushing illness, which for months after her confinement had stretched her upon a peasant's bed (the object of the rude but kindly

charity of an Irish shealing)—for this, day after day, she had whispered to herself, “I shall get well, and I will beg my way to the cottage, and find him there still, and put my little one into his arms, and all will be bright again ;”—for this, as soon as she could walk without aid, had she set out on foot from the distant land ;—for this, almost with a dog’s instinct (for she knew not what way to turn—what county the cottage was placed in ; she only knew the name of the neighbouring town ; and that, populous as it was, sounded strange to the ears of those she asked ; and she had often and often been directed wrong) ;—for this, I say, almost with a dog’s faithful instinct, had she, in cold and heat, in hunger and in thirst, tracked to her old master’s home her desolate and lonely way ! And thrice had she over-fatigued herself—and thrice again been indebted to humble pity for a bed whereon to lay a feverish and broken frame. And once, too, her baby,—her darling, her life of life, had been ill—had been near unto death, and she could not stir till the infant (it was a girl) was well again, and could smile in her face and crow. And thus many, many months had elapsed, since the day she set out on her pilgrimage, to that on which she found its goal. But never, save when the child was ill, had she desponded or abated heart and hope. She should see him again, and he would kiss her child. And now—no—I cannot paint the might of that stunning blow ! She knew not, she dreamed not, of the kind precautions Maltravers had taken ; and he had not sufficiently calculated on her

thorough ignorance of the world. How could she divine that the magistrate, not a mile distant from her, could have told her all she sought to know? Could she but have met the gardener—or the old woman-servant—all would have been well! These last, indeed, she had the forethought to ask for. But the woman was dead, and the gardener had taken a strange service in some distant county. And so died her last gleam of hope. If one person who remembered the search of Maltravers had but met and recognised her! But she had been seen by so few—and now the bright, fresh girl was so sadly altered! Her race was not yet run, and many a sharp wind upon the mournful seas had the bark to brave, before its haven was found at last.

CHAPTER IV.

Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest.—SHAKESPEARE.

Je la plains, je la blâme, et je suis son appui.—VOLTAIRE.*

AND now Alice felt that she was on the wide world alone, with her child—no longer to be protected, but to protect ; and after the first few days of agony, a new spirit, not indeed of hope, but of endurance, passed within her. Her solitary wanderings, with God her only guide, had tended greatly to elevate and confirm her character. She felt a strong reliance on his mysterious mercy—she felt, too, the responsibility of a mother. Thrown for so many months upon her own resources, even for the bread of life, her intellect was unconsciously sharpened, and a habit of patient fortitude had strengthened a nature originally clinging and femininely soft. She resolved to pass into some other country, for she could neither bear the thoughts that haunted the neighbourhood around, nor think, without a loathing horror, of the possibility of her father's return. Accordingly, one day, she renewed her wanderings—and after a week's travel, arrived at a small

* I pity her, I blame her, and am her support.

village. Charity is so common in England, it so spontaneously springs up everywhere, like the good seed by the roadside, that she had rarely wanted the bare necessities of existence. And her humble manner, and sweet, well-tuned voice, so free from the professional whine of mendicancy, had usually its charm for the sternest. So she generally obtained enough to buy bread and a night's lodging, and if sometimes she failed, she could bear hunger, and was not afraid of creeping into some shed, or when by the sea-shore, even into some sheltering cavern. Her child throve too—for God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb! But now, so far as physical privation went, the worst was over.

It so happened that as Alice was drawing herself wearily along to the entrance of the village which was to bound her day's journey, she was met by a lady, past middle age, in whose countenance compassion was so visible, that Alice would not beg, for she had a strange delicacy or pride, or whatever it may be called, and rather begged of the stern than of those who looked kindly at her—she did not like to lower herself in the eyes of the last.

The lady stopped.

“ My poor girl, where are you going ? ”

“ Where God pleases, madam,” said Alice.

“ Humph ! and is that your own child ? —you are almost a child yourself ? ”

“ It is mine, madam,” said Alice, gazing fondly at the infant ;—“ it is my all ! ”

The lady's voice faltered. "Are you married?" she asked.

"Married!—Oh, no, madam!" replied Alice, innocently, yet without blushing, for she never knew that she had done wrong in loving Maltravers.

The lady drew gently back, but not in horror—no, in still deeper compassion; for that lady had true virtue, and she knew that the faults of her sex are sufficiently punished to permit Virtue to pity them without a sin.

"I am sorry for it," she said, however, with greater gravity. "Are you travelling to seek the father?"

"Ah, madam! I shall never see him again!" And Alice wept.

"What!—he has abandoned you—so young, so beautiful!" added the lady to herself.

"Abandoned me!—no, madam; but it is a long tale. Good evening—I thank you kindly for your pity."

The lady's eyes ran over.

"Stay," said she; "tell me frankly where you are going, and what is your object."

"Alas! madam, I am going anywhere, for I have no home; but I wish to live and work for my living, in order that my child may not want for anything. I wish I could maintain myself—he used to say I could."

"He!—your language and manner are not those of a peasant. What can you do?—What do you know?"

"Music, and work, and—and—"

"Music!—this is strange! What were your parents?"

Alice shuddered, and hid her face with her hands.

The lady's interest was now fairly warmed in her behalf.

"She has sinned," said she to herself; "but at that age, how can one be harsh?—She must not be thrown upon the world to make sin a habit. Follow me," she said, after a little pause: "and think you have found a friend."

The lady then turned from the high-road down a green lane which led to a park lodge. This lodge she entered; and, after a short conversation with the inmate, beckoned to Alice to join her.

"Janet," said Alice's new protector to a comely and pleasant-eyed woman, "this is the young person—you will show her and the infant every attention. I shall send down proper clothing for her to-morrow, and I shall then have thought what will be best for her future welfare."

With that, the lady smiled benignly upon Alice, whose heart was too full to speak; and the door of the cottage closed upon her, and Alice thought the day had grown darker.

CHAPTER V.

Believe me, she has won me much to pity her.
Alas ! her gentle nature was not made
To buffet with adversity.—*ROWE*.

Sober he was, and grave from early youth,
Mindful of forms, but more intent on truth ;
In a light drab he uniformly dressed,
And look serene the unruffled mind expressed.

Yet might observers in his sparkling eye
Some observation, somè acuteness spy ;
The friendly thought it keen, the treacherous deemed it sly ;
Yet not a crime could foe or friend detect,
His actions all were like his speech correct—
Chaste, sober, solemn, and devout they named
Him who was this, and not of *this* ashamed.—*CRABBE*.

I'll on and sound this secret.—*BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER*.

MRS LESLIE, the lady introduced to the reader in the last chapter, was a woman of the firmest intellect, combined (no unusual combination) with the softest heart. She learned Alice's history with admiration and pity. The natural innocence and honesty of the young mother spoke so eloquently in her words and looks, that Mrs Leslie, on hearing her tale, found much less to forgive than she had anticipated. Still she deemed it necessary to enlighten Alice as to the criminality of the connection she had formed. But here Alice was singularly dull—she listened in meek patience to Mrs Leslie's lecture ; but it evidently made but slight impres-

sion on her. She had not yet seen enough of the Social state, to correct the first impressions of the Natural : and all she could say in answer to Mrs Leslie was,—“It may be all very true, madam, but I have been so much better since I knew him !”

But though Alice took humbly any censure upon herself, she would not hear a syllable insinuated against Maltravers. When, in a very natural indignation, Mrs Leslie denounced him as a destroyer of innocence—for Mrs Leslie could not learn all that extenuated his offence—Alice started up with flashing eyes and heaving heart, and would have hurried from the only shelter she had in the wide world—she would sooner have died—she would sooner even have seen her child die, than done that idol of her soul, who, in her eyes, stood alone on some pinnacle between earth and heaven, the wrong of hearing him reviled. With difficulty Mrs Leslie could restrain, with still more difficulty could she pacify and soothe her ; and, for the girl’s petulance, which others might have deemed insolent or ungrateful, the woman-heart of Mrs Leslie loved her all the better. The more she saw of Alice, and the more she comprehended her story and her character, the more was she lost in wonder at the romance of which this beautiful child had been the heroine, and the more perplexed she was as to Alice’s future prospects.

At length, however, when she became acquainted with Alice’s musical acquirements, which were, indeed, of no common order, a light broke in upon her. Here was the source of her future independence. Mal-

travers, it will be remembered, was a musician of consummate skill as well as taste, and Alice's natural talent for the art had advanced her, in the space of months, to a degree of perfection which it cost others—which it had cost even the quick Maltravers—years to obtain. But we learn so rapidly when our teachers are those we love ; and it may be observed that the less our knowledge, the less perhaps our genius in other things, the more facile are our attainments in music, which is a very jealous mistress of the mind. Mrs Leslie resolved to have her perfected in this art, and so enable her to become a teacher to others. In the town of C——, about thirty miles from Mrs Leslie's house, though in the same county, there was no inconsiderable circle of wealthy and intelligent persons ; for it was a cathedral town, and the resident clergy drew around them a kind of provincial aristocracy. Here, as in most rural towns in England, music was much cultivated, both among the higher and middle classes. There were amateur concerts, and glee-clubs, and subscriptions for sacred music ; and once every five years there was the great C—— Festival. In this town, Mrs Leslie established Alice ; she placed her under the roof of a *ci-devant* music-master, who, having retired from his profession, was no longer jealous of rivals, but who, by handsome terms, was induced to complete the education of Alice. It was an eligible and comfortable abode, and the music-master and his wife were a good-natured easy old couple.

Three months of resolute and unceasing perseverance,

combined with the singular ductility and native gifts of Alice, sufficed to render her the most promising pupil the good musician had ever accomplished ; and in three months more, introduced by Mrs Leslie to many of the families in the place, Alice was established in a home of her own ; and what with regular lessons, and occasional assistance at musical parties, she was fairly earning what her tutor reasonably pronounced to be “a very genteel independence.”

Now, in these arrangements (for we must here go back a little), there had been one gigantic difficulty of conscience in one party, of feeling in another, to surmount. Mrs Leslie saw at once that unless Alice’s misfortune was concealed, all the virtues and all the talents in the world could not enable her to retrace the one false step. Mrs Leslie was a woman of habitual truth and strict rectitude, and she was sorely perplexed between the propriety of candour and its cruelty. She felt unequal to take the responsibility of action on herself ; and, after much meditation, she resolved to confide her scruples to one who, of all whom she knew, possessed the highest character for moral worth and religious sanctity. This gentleman, lately a widower, lived at the outskirts of the town selected for Alice’s future residence, and at that time happened to be on a visit in Mrs Leslie’s neighbourhood. He was an opulent man, a banker ; he had once represented the town in parliament, and retiring, from disinclination to the late hours and onerous fatigues even of an unreformed House of Commons, he still possessed an influence to

return one, if not both, of the members for the city of C——. And that influence was always exerted so as best to secure his own interest with the powers that be, and advance certain objects of ambition (for he was both an ostentatious and ambitious man in his own way), which he felt he might more easily obtain by proxy than by his own votes and voice in parliament—an atmosphere in which his light did not shine. And it was with a wonderful address that the banker contrived at once to support the government, and yet, by the frequent expression of liberal opinions, to conciliate the Whigs and the Dissenters of his neighbourhood. Parties, political and sectarian, were not then so irreconcilable as they are now. In the whole county there was no one so respected as this eminent person, and yet he possessed no shining talents, though a laborious and energetic man of business. It was solely and wholly the force of moral character which gave him his position in society. He felt this; he was sensitively proud of it; he was painfully anxious not to lose an atom of a distinction that required to be vigilantly secured. He was a very *remarkable*, yet not (perhaps could we penetrate all hearts) a very *uncommon* character—this banker! He had risen from, comparatively speaking, a low origin and humble fortunes, and entirely by the scrupulous and sedate propriety of his outward conduct. With such a propriety he, therefore, inseparably connected every notion of worldly prosperity and honour. Thus, though far from a bad man, he was forced into being something of a hypocrite.

Every year he had grown more starch and more saintly. He was conscience-keeper to the whole town ; and it is astonishing how many persons hardly dared to make a will or subscribe to a charity without his advice. As he was a shrewd man of this world, as well as an accredited guide to the next, his advice was precisely of a nature to reconcile the Conscience and the Interest ; and he was a kind of negotiator in the reciprocal diplomacy of earth and heaven. But our banker was really a charitable man, and a benevolent man, and a sincere believer. How, then, was he a hypocrite ? Simply, because he professed to be far *more* charitable, *more* benevolent, and *more* pious than he really was. His reputation had now arrived to that degree of immaculate polish, that the smallest breath, which would not have tarnished the character of another man, would have fixed an indelible stain upon his. As he affected to be more strict than the churchman, and was a great oracle with all who regarded churchmen as lukewarm, so his conduct was narrowly watched by all the clergy of the orthodox cathedral, good men, doubtless, but not affecting to be saints, who were jealous at being so luminescently outshone by a layman and an authority of the sectarians. On the other hand, the intense homage, and almost worship, he received from his followers, kept his goodness upon a stretch, if not beyond all human power, certainly beyond his own. For “admiration” (as it is well said somewhere) “is a kind of superstition which expects miracles.” From nature, this gentleman had received an inordinate share of animal propensities ;

he had strong passions, he was by temperament a sensualist. He loved good eating and good wine—he loved women. The two former blessings of the carnal life are not incompatible with canonisation ; but St Anthony has shown that women, however angelic, are not precisely that order of angels that saints may safely commune with. If, therefore, he ever yielded to temptations of a sexual nature, it was with profound secrecy and caution ; nor did his right hand know what his left hand did.

This gentleman had married a woman much older than himself, but her fortune had been one of the necessary stepping-stones in his career. His exemplary conduct towards this lady, ugly as well as old, had done much towards increasing the odour of his sanctity. She died of an ague, and the widower did not shock probabilities by affecting too severe a grief.

“The Lord’s will be done !” said he ; “she was a good woman, but we should not set our affections too much upon his perishable creatures !”

This was all he was ever heard to say on the matter. He took an elderly gentlewoman, distantly related to him, to manage his house, and sit at the head of the table ; and it was thought not impossible, though the widower was past fifty, that he might marry again.

Such was the gentleman called in by Mrs Leslie, who, of the same religious opinions, had long known and revered him, to decide the affairs of Alice and of Conscience.

As this man exercised no slight or fugitive influence

over Alice Darvil's destinies, his counsels on the point in discussion ought to be fairly related.

"And now," said Mrs Leslie concluding the history, "you will perceive, my dear sir, that this poor young creature has been less culpable than she appears. From the extraordinary proficiency she has made in music, in a time that, by her own account, seems incredibly short, I should suspect her unprincipled betrayer must have been an artist—a professional man. It is just possible that they may meet again, and (as the ranks between them cannot be so very disproportionate) that he may marry her. I am sure that he could not do a better or a wiser thing, for she loves him too fondly, despite her wrongs. Under these circumstances, would it be a—a culpable disguise of truth to represent her as a married woman—separated from her husband—and give her the name of her seducer? Without such a precaution you will see, sir, that all hope of settling her reputably in life—all chance of procuring her any creditable independence, is out of the question. Such is my dilemma. What is your advice?—palatable or not, I shall abide by it."

The banker's grave and saturnine countenance exhibited a slight degree of embarrassment at the case submitted to him. He began brushing away, with the cuff of his black coat, some atoms of dust that had settled on his drab small-clothes; and, after a slight pause, he replied, "Why, really, dear madam, the question is one of much delicacy—I doubt if men could be good judges upon it; your sex's tact and instinct on

these matters are better—much better than our sagacity. There is much in the dictates of your own heart ; for to those who are in the grace of the Lord, he vouchsafes to communicate his pleasure, by spiritual hints and inward suggestions !”

“ If so, my dear sir, the matter is decided ; for my heart whispers me, that this slight deviation from truth would be a less culpable offence than turning so young and, I had almost said, so innocent a creature adrift upon the world. I may take your opinion as my sanction.”

“ Why really, I can scarcely say so much as that,” said the banker, with a slight smile. “ A deviation from truth cannot be incurred without some forfeiture of strict duty.”

“ Not in any case ? Alas, I was afraid so !” said Mrs Leslie, despondingly.

“ In any case ! Oh, there *may* be cases ! But had I not better see the young woman, and ascertain that your benevolent heart has not deceived you ?”

“ I wish you would,” said Mrs Leslie ; “ she is now in the house. I will ring for her.”

“ Should we not be alone ?”

“ Certainly ; I will leave you together.”

Alice was sent for, and appeared.

“ This pious gentleman,” said Mrs Leslie, “ will confer with you for a few moments, my child. Do not be afraid ; he is the best of men.” With these words of encouragement the good lady vanished, and Alice saw before her a tall dark man, with a head bald in front,

yet larger behind than before, with spectacles upon a pair of shrewd, penetrating eyes, and an outline of countenance that showed he must have been handsome in earlier manhood.

"My young friend," said the banker, seating himself, after a deliberate survey of the fair countenance that blushed beneath his gaze, "Mrs Leslie and myself have been conferring upon your temporal welfare. You have been unfortunate, my child?"

"Ah—yes."

"Well, well, you are very young; we must not be too severe upon youth. You will never do so again?"

"Do what, please you, sir?"

"What? Humph! I mean that you will be more rigid, more circumspect. Men are deceitful; you must be on your guard against them. You are handsome, child, very handsome—more's the pity." And the banker took Alice's hand and pressed it with great unction. Alice looked at him gravely, and drew the hand away instinctively.

The banker lowered his spectacles, and gazed at her without their aid; his eyes were still fine and expressive. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Alice—Alice Darvil, sir."

"Well, Alice, we have been considering what is best for you. You wish to earn your own livelihood, and perhaps marry some honest man hereafter."

"Marry, sir—never!" said Alice, with great earnestness, her eyes filling with tears.

“And why?”

“Because I shall never see *him* on earth, and they do not marry in heaven, sir.”

The banker was moved, for he was not worse than his neighbours, though trying to make them believe he was so much better.

“Well, time enough to talk of that; but in the meanwhile you would support yourself?”

“Yes, sir. His child ought to be a burden to none—nor I either. I once wished to die, but then who would love my little one? *Now* I wish to live.”

“But what mode of livelihood would you prefer? Would you go into a family, in some capacity?—not that of a servant—you are too delicate for that.”

“Oh, no—no!”

“But, again, why?” asked the banker, soothingly, yet surprised.

“Because,” said Alice, almost solemnly, “there are some hours when I feel I must be alone. I sometimes think I am not all right *here*,” and she touched her forehead. “They called me an idiot before I knew *him*!—No, I could not live with others, for I can only cry when nobody but my child is with me.”

This was said with such unconscious, and therefore with such pathetic simplicity, that the banker was sensibly affected. He rose, stirred the fire, resettled himself, and after a pause, said emphatically—“Alice, I will be your friend. Let me believe you will deserve it.”

Alice bent her graceful head, and seeing that he had

sunk into an abstracted silence, she thought it time for her to withdraw.

“She is, indeed, beautiful,” said the banker, almost aloud, when he was alone ; “and the old lady is right —she is as innocent as if she had not fallen. I wonder——” Here he stopped short, and walked to the glass over the mantelpiece, where he was still gazing on his own features, when Mrs Leslie returned.

“Well, sir,” said she, a little surprised at this seeming vanity in so pious a man.

The banker started. “Madam, I honour your penetration as much as your charity ; I think that there is so much to be feared in letting all the world know this young female’s past error, that, though I dare not advise, I cannot blame, your concealment of it.”

“But, sir, your words have sunk deep into my thoughts ; you said every deviation from truth was a forfeiture of duty.”

“Certainly ; but there are some exceptions. The world is a bad world ; we are born in sin, and the children of wrath. We do not tell infants all the truth, when they ask us questions, the proper answers of which would mislead, not enlighten, them. In some things the whole world are infants. The very science of government is the science of concealing truth—so is the system of trade. We could not blame the tradesman for not telling the public, that if all his debts were called in he would be a bankrupt.”

“And he may marry her after all—this Mr Butler.”

“Heaven forbid—the villain !—Well, madam, I

will see to this poor young thing—she shall not want a guide."

"Heaven reward you. How wicked some people are to call you severe!"

"I can bear *that* blame with a meek temper, madam. Good-day."

"Good-day. You will remember how strictly confidential has been our conversation."

"Not a breath shall transpire. I will send you some tracts to-morrow—so comforting. Heaven bless you!"

This difficulty smoothed, Mrs Leslie, to her astonishment, found that she had another to contend with in Alice herself. For, first, Alice conceived that to change her name and keep her secret, was to confess that she ought to be ashamed, rather than proud, of her love to Ernest, and she thought that so ungrateful to him!—and, secondly, to take his name, to pass for his wife—what presumption—he would certainly have a right to be offended! At these scruples, Mrs Leslie well-nigh lost all patience; and the banker, to his own surprise, was again called in. We have said that he was an experienced and skilful adviser, which implies the faculty of persuasion. He soon saw the handle by which Alice's obstinacy might always be moved—her little girl's welfare. He put this so forcibly before her eyes; he represented the child's future fate as resting so much, not only on her own good conduct, but on her outward respectability, that he prevailed upon her at last; and, perhaps, one argument that he incidentally used, had as much effect on her as the rest.

"This Mr Butler, if yet in England, may pass through our town—may visit amongst us—may hear you spoken of, by a name similar to his own, and curiosity would thus induce him to seek you. Take his name, and you will always bear an honourable index to your mutual discovery and recognition. Besides, when you are respectable, honoured, and earning an independence, he may not be too proud to marry you. But take your own name, avow your own history, and not only will your child be an outcast, yourself a beggar, or, at best, a menial dependant, but you lose every hope of recovering the object of your too-devoted attachment."

Thus Alice was convinced. From that time she became close and reserved in her communications. Mrs Leslie had wisely selected a town sufficiently remote from her own abode to preclude any revelations of her domestics ; and, as Mrs Butler, Alice attracted universal sympathy and respect from the exercise of her talents, the modest sweetness of her manners, the unblemished propriety of her conduct. Somehow or other, no sooner did she learn the philosophy of concealment, than she made a great leap in knowledge of the world. And, though flattered and courted by the young loungers of C——, she steered her course with so much address, that she was never persecuted. For there are few men in the world who make advances where there is no encouragement.

The banker observed her conduct with silent vigilance. He met her often, he visited her often. He was intimate at houses where she attended to teach or

perform. He lent her good books—he advised her—he preached to her. Alice began to look up to him—to like him—to consider him, as a village girl in Catholic countries may consider a benevolent and kindly priest. And he—what was his object?—at that time it is impossible to guess:—he became thoughtful and abstracted.

One day an old maid and an old clergyman met in the High Street of C——.

“And how do you do, ma’am?” said the clergyman; “how is the rheumatism?”

“Better, thank you, sir. Any news?”

The clergyman smiled, and something hovered on his lips, which he suppressed.

“Were you,” the old maid resumed, “at Mrs Mac-nab’s last night? Charming music!”

“Charming! How pretty that Mrs Butler is! and how humble! Knows her station—so unlike professional people.”

“Yes, indeed!—What attention a certain banker paid her!”

“He! he! he! yes; he is very fatherly—very!”

“Perhaps he will marry again; he is always talking of the holy state of matrimony—a holy state it may be—but, Heaven knows, his wife, poor woman, did not make it a pleasant one.”

“There may be more causes for that than we guess of,” said the clergyman, mysteriously. “I would not be uncharitable, but——”

“But what?”

"Oh, when he was young, our great man was not so correct, I fancy, as he is now."

"So I have heard it whispered ; but nothing against him was ever known."

"Hem—it is very odd !"

"What's very odd ?"

"Why, but it's a secret—I daresay it's all very right."

"Oh, I shan't say a word. Are you going to the cathedral?—don't let me keep you standing. Now, pray proceed !"

"Well, then, yesterday I was doing duty in a village more than twenty miles hence, and I loitered in the village to take an early dinner ; and afterwards, while my horse was feeding, I strolled down the green."

"Well—well ?"

"And I saw a gentleman muffled carefully up, with his hat slouched over his face, at the door of a cottage, with a little child in his arms, and he kissed it more fondly than, be we ever so good, we generally kiss other people's children ; and then he gave it to a peasant woman standing near him, and mounted his horse, which was tied to the gate, and trotted past me ; and who do you think this was ?"

"Patience me—I can't guess !"

"Why, our saintly banker. I bowed to him, and I assure you he turned as red, ma'am, as your waistband."

"My!"

"I just turned into the cottage when he was out of sight, for I was thirsty, and asked for a glass of water,

and I saw the child. I declare, I would not be uncharitable, but I thought it monstrous like—you know whom ! ”

“ Gracious ! you don’t say——”

“ I asked the woman ‘ if it was hers ? ’ and she said ‘ No,’ but was very short.”

“ Dear me, I *must* find this out ! —What is the name of the village ? ”

“ Covedale.”

“ Oh, I know—I know.”

“ Not a word of this ; I daresay there’s nothing in it. But I am not much in favour of your new lights.”

“ Nor I neither. What better than the good old Church of England ? ”

“ Madam, your sentiments do you honour ; you’ll be sure not to say anything of our little mystery.”

“ Not a syllable.”

Two days after this, three old maids made an excursion to the village of Covedale, and lo ! the cottage in question was shut up—the woman and the child were gone. The people in the village knew nothing about them—had seen nothing particular in the woman or child—had always supposed them mother and daughter ; and the gentleman identified by the clerical inquisitor with the banker, had never but once been observed in the place.

“ The vile old parson,” said the eldest of the old maids, “ to take away so good a man’s character ! —and the fly will cost one pound two, with the baiting ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

In this disposition was I, when, looking out of my window one day to take the air, I perceived a kind of peasant who looked at me very attentively.
—*Gil Blas.*

A SUMMER's evening in a retired country town has something melancholy in it. You have the streets of a metropolis without their animated bustle—you have the stillness of the country without its birds and flowers. The reader will please to bring before him a quiet street, in the quiet country town of C——, in a quiet evening in quiet June : the picture is not mirthful—two young dogs are playing in the street, one old dog is watching by a newly-painted door. A few ladies of middle age move noiselessly along the pavement, returning home to tea : they wear white muslin dresses, green spencers a little faded, straw poke bonnets, with green or coffee-coloured gauze veils. By twos and threes they have disappeared within the thresholds of small, neat houses, with little railings, enclosing little green plots. Threshold, house, railing, and plot, each as like to the other as are those small commodities called “nest tables,” which, “even as a broken mirror multiplies,” summon to the bewildered eye countless iterations of one four-

legged individual. Paradise Place was a set of nest houses.

A cow had passed through the streets with a milk-woman behind ; two young and gay shopmen, "looking after the gals," had reconnoitred the street, and vanished in despair. The twilight advanced—but gently ; and though a star or two were up, the air was still clear. At the open window of one of the tenements in this street sat Alice Darvil. She had been working (that pretty excuse to women for thinking), and as the thoughts grew upon her, and the evening waned, the work had fallen upon her knee, and her hands dropped mechanically on her lap. Her profile was turned towards the street ; but without moving her head or changing her attitude, her eyes glanced from time to time to her little girl, who nestled on the ground beside her, tired with play ; and wondering, perhaps, why she was not already in bed, seemed as tranquil as the young mother herself. And sometimes Alice's eyes filled with tears—and then she sighed, as if to sigh the tears away. But poor Alice, if she grieved, hers was now a silent and a patient grief !

The street was deserted of all other passengers, when a man passed along the pavement, on the side opposite to Alice's house. His garb was rude and homely, between that of a labourer and a farmer ; but still there was an affectation of tawdry show about the bright scarlet silk handkerchief, tied in a sailor or smuggler fashion round the sinewy throat ; the hat was set jauntily on one side, and, dangling many an inch from the gaily-

striped waistcoat, glittered a watch-chain and seals, which appeared suspiciously out of character with the rest of the attire. The passenger was covered with dust; and, as the street was in a suburb communicating with the high-road, and formed one of the entrances into the town, he had probably, after a long day's journey, reached his evening's destination. The looks of this stranger were anxious, restless, and perturbed. In his gait and swagger there was the recklessness of the professional blackguard; but in his vigilant, prying, suspicious eyes, there was a hang-dog expression of apprehension and fear. He seemed a man upon whom Crime had set its significant mark—and who saw a purse with one eye and a gibbet with the other. Alice did not note the stranger, until she herself had attracted and centred all his attention. He halted abruptly as he caught a view of her face—shaded his eyes with his hand as if to gaze more intently—and at length burst into an exclamation of surprise and pleasure. At that instant Alice turned, and her gaze met that of the stranger. The fascination of the basilisk can scarcely more stun and paralyse its victim than the look of this stranger charmed, with the appalling glamour of horror, the eye and soul of Alice Darvil. Her face became suddenly locked and rigid, her lips as white as marble, her eyes almost started from their sockets—she pressed her hands convulsively together, and shuddered—but still she did not move. The man nodded, and grinned, and then, deliberately crossing the street, gained the door, and knocked loudly. Still Alice did not stir—

her senses seemed to have forsaken her—presently the stranger's loud, rough voice was heard below, in answer to the accents of the solitary woman-servant whom Alice kept in her employ ; and his strong, heavy tread made the slight staircase creak and tremble. Then Alice rose as by an instinct, caught her child in her arms, and stood erect and motionless, facing the door. It opened—and the FATHER and DAUGHTER were once more face to face within the same walls.

“ Well, Alley, how are you, my blowen ?—glad to see your old dad again, I'll be sworn. No ceremony, sit down. Ha, ha ! snug here—very snug—we shall live together charmingly. Trade on your own account —eh ? sly ;—well, can't desert your poor old father. Let's have something to eat and drink.”

So saying, Darvil threw himself at length upon the neat, prim, little chintz sofa, with the air of a man resolved to make himself perfectly at home.

Alice gazed, and trembled violently, but still said nothing—the power of voice had indeed left her.

“ Come, why don't you stir your stumps ? I suppose I must wait on myself—fine manners !—But, ho, ho—a bell, by gosh—mighty grand—never mind—I am used to call for my own wants.”

A hearty tug at the frail bell-rope sent a shrill alarum half-way through the long lath-and-plaster row of Paradise Place, and left the instrument of the sound in the hand of its creator.

Up came the maid-servant, a formal old woman, most respectable.

"Harkye, old girl!" said Darvil; "bring up the best you have to eat—not particular—let there be plenty. And I say—a bottle of brandy. Come, don't stand there staring like a stuck pig. Budge! Hell and furies! don't you hear me?"

The servant retreated, as if a pistol had been put to her head, and Darvil, laughing loud, threw himself again upon the sofa. Alice looked at him, and, still without saying a word, glided from the room—her child in her arms. She hurried down-stairs, and in the hall met her servant. The latter, who was much attached to her mistress, was alarmed to see her about to leave the house.

"Why, marm, where be you going? Dear heart, you have no bonnet on! What is the matter? Who is this?"

"Oh!" cried Alice, in agony; "what shall I do?—where shall I fly?" The door above opened. Alice heard, started, and the next moment was in the street. She ran on breathlessly, and like one insane. Her mind was, indeed, for the time, gone, and had a river flowed before her way, she would have plunged into an escape from a world that seemed too narrow to hold a father and his child.

But just as she turned the corner of a street that led into the more public thoroughfares, she felt her arm grasped, and a voice called out her name in surprised and startled accents.

"Heavens, Mrs Butler! Alice! What do I see? What is the matter?"

"Oh, sir, save me!—you are a good man—a great man—save me—he is returned!"

"He! who?—Mr Butler?" said the banker (for that gentleman it was), in a changed and trembling voice.

"No, no—ah, not he!—I did not say *he*—I said my father—my, my—ah—look behind—look behind—is he coming?"

"Calm yourself, my dear young friend—no one is near. I will go and reason with your father. No one shall harm you—I will protect you. Go back—go back, I will follow—we must not be seen together." And the tall banker seemed trying to shrink into a nutshell.

"No, no," said Alice, growing yet paler, "I cannot go back."

"Well, then, just follow me to the door—your servant shall get you your bonnet, and accompany you to my house, where you can wait till I return. Meanwhile I will see your father, and rid you, I trust, of his presence."

The banker, who spoke in a very hurried and even impatient voice, waited for no reply, but took his way to Alice's house. Alice herself did not follow, but remained in the very place where she was left, till joined by her servant, who then conducted her to the rich man's residence. But Alice's mind had not recovered its shock, and her thoughts wandered alarmingly.

CHAPTER VII.

Miramont.—Do they chafe roundly?

Andrew.—As they were rubbed with soap, sir.

And now they swear aloud, now calm again
Like a ring of bells, whose sound the wind still utters,
And then they sit in council what to do,
And then they jar again what shall be done?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

OH ! what a picture of human nature it was when the banker and the vagabond sat together in that little drawing-room, facing each other,—one in the arm-chair, one on the sofa ! Darvil was still employed on some cold meat, and was making wry faces at the very indifferent brandy which he had frightened the formal old servant into buying at the nearest public-house ; and opposite sat the respectable—highly respectable man of forms and ceremonies, of decencies and quackeries, gazing gravely upon this low, dare-devil ruffian : —the well-to-do hypocrite—the penniless villain ;—the man who had everything to lose—the man who had nothing in the wide world but his own mischievous, rascally life, a gold watch, chain and seals, which he had stolen the day before, and thirteen shillings and threepence halfpenny in his left breeches-pocket !

The man of wealth was by no means well acquainted

with the nature of the beast before him. He had heard from Mrs Leslie (as we remember) the outline of Alice's history, and ascertained that their joint protégé's father was a great blackguard ; but he expected to find Mr Darvil a mere dull, brutish villain, a peasant-ruffian—a blunt serf, without brains, or their substitute, effrontery. But Luke Darvil was a clever, half-educated fellow : he did not sin from ignorance, but had wit enough to have bad principles, and he was as impudent as if he had lived all his life in the best society. He was not frightened at the banker's drab breeches and imposing air—not he ! The Duke of Wellington would not have frightened Luke Darvil, unless his grace had had the constables for his *aides-de-camp*.

The banker, to use a homely phrase, was “taken aback.”

“Look you here, Mr What's-your-name !” said Darvil, swallowing a glass of the raw alcohol as if it had been water,—“look you now—you can't humbug me. What the devil do you care about my daughter's respectability or comfort, or anything else, grave old dog as you are !—It is my daughter herself you are licking your brown old chaps at !—and, 'faith, my Alley is a very pretty girl—very—but queer as moonshine. You'll drive a much better bargain with me than with her.”

The banker coloured scarlet—he bit his lips, and measured his companion from head to foot (while the latter lolled on the sofa), as if he were meditating the

possibility of kicking him down-stairs. But Luke Darvil would have thrashed the banker, and all his clerks into the bargain. His frame was like a trunk of thews and muscles, packed up by that careful dame, Nature, as tightly as possible ; and a prize-fighter would have thought twice before he had entered the ring against so awkward a customer. The banker was a man prudent to a fault, and he pushed his chair six inches back, as he concluded his survey.

“Sir,” then said he, very quietly, “do not let us misunderstand each other. Your daughter is safe from your control—if you molest her, the law will protect——”

“She is not of age,” said Darvil. “Your health, old boy.”

“Whether she is of age or not,” returned the banker, unheeding the courtesy conveyed in the last sentence, “I do not care three straws—I know enough of the law to know, that if she have rich friends in this town, and you have none, she will be protected, and you will go to the treadmill.”

“That is spoken like a sensible man,” said Darvil, for the first time with a show of respect in his manner ; “you now take a practical view of matters, as we used to say at the spouting club.”

“If I were in your situation, Mr Darvil, I tell you what I would do. I would leave my daughter and this town to-morrow morning, and I would promise never to return, and never to molest her, on condition

she allowed me a certain sum from her earnings, paid quarterly."

"And if I preferred living with her?"

"In that case, I, as a magistrate of this town, would have you sent away as a vagrant, or apprehended——"

"Ha!"

"Apprehended on suspicion of stealing that gold chain and seals which you wear so ostentatiously."

"By goles, but you're a clever fellow," said Darvil, involuntarily : "you know human natur."

The banker smiled : strange to say, he was pleased with the compliment.

"But," resumed Darvil, helping himself to another slice of beef, "you are in the wrong box—planted in Queer Street, as *we* say in London ; for if you care a d——n about my daughter's respectability, you will never muzzle her father on suspicion of theft—and so there's tit for tat, my old gentleman !"

"I shall deny that you are her father, Mr Darvil ; and I think you will find it hard to prove the fact in any town where I am a magistrate."

"By goles, what a good prig you would have made ! You are as sharp as a gimlet. Surely you were brought up at the Old Bailey !"

"Mr Darvil, be ruled. You seem a man not deaf to reason, and I ask you whether, in any town in this country, a poor man in suspicious circumstances can do anything against a rich man whose character is established ? Perhaps you are right in the main : I have nothing to do with that. But I tell you that you

shall quit this house in half an hour—that you shall never enter it again but at your peril ; and if you do—within ten minutes from that time you shall be in the town jail. It is no longer a contest between you and your defenceless daughter ; it is a contest between——”

“A trumper in fustian, and a gemman as drives a coach,” interrupted Darvil, laughing bitterly, yet heartily. “Good—good !”

The banker rose. “I think you have made a very clever definition,” said he. “Half an hour—you recollect—good evening.”

“Stay,” said Darvil ; “you are the first man I have seen for many a year that I can take a fancy to. Sit down—sit down, I say, and talk a bit, and we shall come to terms soon, I dare say : that’s right. Lord ! how I should like to have you on the roadside instead of within these four gimcrack walls ! Ha ! ha ! the argufying would be all in *my* favour then.”

The banker was not a brave man, and his colour changed slightly at the intimation of this obliging wish. Darvil eyed him grimly and chucklingly.

The rich man resumed : “That may or may not be, Mr Darvil, according as I might happen or not to have pistols about me. But to the point. Quit this house without further debate, without noise, without mentioning to any one else your claim upon its owner——”

“Well, and the return ?”

“Ten guineas now, and the same sum quarterly, as long as the young lady lives in this town, and you never persecute her by word or letter.”

"That is forty guineas a-year. I can't live upon it."

"You will cost less in the House of Correction, Mr Darvil."

"Come, make it a hundred : Alley is cheap at that."

"Not a farthing more," said the banker, buttoning up his breeches-pockets with a determined air.

"Well, out with the shiners."

"Do you promise or not?"

"I promise."

"There are your ten guineas. If in half an hour you are not gone—why then——"

"Then ?"

"Why then you have robbed me of ten guineas, and must take the usual consequences of robbery."

Darvil started to his feet—his eyes glared—he grasped the carving-knife before him.

"You are a bold fellow," said the banker, quietly ; "but it won't do. It is not worth your while to murder me ; and I am a man sure to be missed."

Darvil sank down, sullen and foiled. The respectable man was more than a match for the villain.

"Had you been as poor as I—Gad ! what a rogue you would have been !"

"I think not," said the banker ; "I believe roguery to be a very bad policy. Perhaps once I *was* almost as poor as you are, but I never turned rogue."

"You never were in my circumstances," returned Darvil, gloomily. "I was a gentleman's son. Come, you shall hear my story. My father was well-born, but married a maid-servant when he was at college ;

his family disowned him, and left him to starve. He died in the struggle against a poverty he was not brought up to, and my dame went into service again ; became housekeeper to an old bachelor—sent me to school—but mother had a family by the old bachelor, and I was taken from school and put to trade. All hated me—for I was ugly ; damn them ! Mother cut me—I wanted money—robbed the old bachelor—was sent to jail, and learned there a lesson or two how to rob better in future. Mother died—I was adrift on the world. The world was my foe—could not make it up with the world, so we went to war ;—you understand, old boy ? Married a poor woman and pretty ;—wife made me jealous—had learned to suspect every one. Alice born—did not believe her mine ; not like me—perhaps a gentleman's child. I hate—I loathe gentlemen. Got drunk one night—kicked my wife in the stomach three weeks after her confinement. Wife died—tried for my life—got off. Went to another county—having had a sort of education, and being sharp eno', got work as a mechanic. Hated work just as I hated gentlemen—for was I not by blood a gentleman ? There was the curse. Alice grew up ; never looked on her as my flesh and blood. Her mother was a w—— ! Why should not *she* be one ? There, that's enough. Plenty of excuse, I think, for all I have ever done. Curse the world—curse the rich—curse the handsome—curse—curse all ! ”

“ You have been a very foolish man,” said the banker ; “ and seem to me to have had very good cards, if you

had known how to play them. However, that is your look-out. It is not yet too late to repent ;—age is creeping on you.—Man, there is another world.”

The banker said the last words with a tone of solemn and even dignified adjuration.

“ You think so—do you ? ” said Darvil, staring at him.

“ From my soul I do.”

“ Then you are not the sensible man I took you for,” replied Darvil, dryly ; “ and I should like to talk to you on that subject.”

But our Dives, however sincere a believer, was by no means one

“ At whose control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul.”

He had words of comfort for the pious, but he had none for the sceptic—he could soothe, but he could not convert. It was not in his way ; besides, he saw no credit in making a convert of Luke Darvil. Accordingly, he again rose with some quickness, and said—

“ No, sir ; that is useless, I fear, and I have no time to spare ; and so once more good-night to you.”

“ But you have not arranged where my allowance is to be sent.”

“ Ah ! true ; I will guarantee it. You will find my name sufficient security.”

“ At least, it is the best I can get,” returned Darvil, carelessly ; “ and, after all, it is not a bad chance-day’s work. But I’m sure I can’t say where the money shall

be sent. I don't know a man who would not grab it."

"Very well, then—the best thing (I speak as a man of business) will be to draw on me for ten guineas, quarterly. Wherever you are staying, any banker can effect this for you. But mind, if ever you overdraw, the account stops."

"I understand," said Darvil; "and when I have finished the bottle I shall be off."

"You had better," replied the banker, as he opened the door.

The rich man returned home hurriedly. "So Alice, after all, has some gentle blood in her veins," thought he. "But that father—no, it will never do. I wish he were hanged and nobody the wiser. I should very much like to arrange the matter without marrying; but then—scandal—scandal—scandal. After all, I had better give up all thoughts of her. She is monstrous handsome, and so—humph!—I shall never grow an old man."

CHAPTER VIII.

Began to bend down his admiring eyes
On all her touching looks and qualities,
Turning their shapely sweetness every way
Till 'twas his food and habit day by day.—LEIGH HUNT.

THERE must have been a secret something about Alice Darvil singularly captivating, that (associated as she was with images of the most sordid and the vilest crimes) left her still pure and lovely alike in the eyes of a man as fastidious as Ernest Maltravers, and of a man as influenced by all the thoughts and theories of the world, as the shrewd banker of C——. Amidst things foul and hateful had sprung up this beautiful flower, as if to preserve the inherent heavenliness and grace of human nature, and proclaim the handiwork of God in scenes where human nature had been most debased by the abuses of social art, and where the light of God himself was most darkened and obscured. That such contrasts, though rarely and as by chance, are found, every one who has carefully examined the wastes and deserts of life must own. I have drawn Alice Darvil scrupulously from life: and I can declare that I have not exaggerated hue or lineament in the portrait. I do not suppose, with our good banker, that she owed anything, unless it might be a greater delicacy of form and

feature, to whatever mixture of gentle blood was in her veins. But somehow or other, in her original conformation there was the happy bias of the plants towards the Pure and the Bright. For, despite Helvetius, a common experience teaches us that though education and circumstances may mould the mass, Nature herself sometimes forms the individual and throws into the clay, or its spirit, so much of beauty or deformity, that nothing can utterly subdue the original elements of character. From sweets one draws poison—from poisons another extracts but sweets. But I, often deeply pondering over the psychological history of Alice Darvil, think that one principal cause why she escaped the early contaminations around her, was in the slow and protracted development of her intellectual faculties. Whether or not the brutal violence of her father had in childhood acted through the nerves upon the brain, certain it is that until she knew Maltravers—until she loved—till she was cherished—her mind had seemed torpid and locked up. True, Darvil had taught her nothing, nor permitted her to be taught anything; but that mere ignorance would have been no preservation to a quick, observant mind. It was the bluntness of the senses themselves that operated like an armour between her mind and the vile things around her. It was the rough, dull covering of the chrysalis, framed to bear rude contact and biting weather, that the butterfly might break forth, winged and glorious, in due season. Had Alice been a quick child, Alice would have probably grown up a depraved

and dissolute woman ; but she comprehended, she understood little or nothing, till she found an inspirer in that affection which inspires both beast and man ; which makes the dog (in his natural state one of the meanest of the savage race) a companion, a guardian, a protector, and raises Instinct half way to the height of Reason.

The banker had a strong regard for Alice ; and when he reached home, he heard with great pain that she was in a high state of fever. She remained beneath his roof that night, and the elderly gentlewoman, his relation and *gouvernante*, attended her. The banker slept but little ; and the next morning his countenance was unusually pale.

Towards daybreak Alice had fallen into a sound and refreshing sleep ; and when, on waking, she found, by a note from her host, that her father had left her house, and she might return in safety and without fear, a violent flood of tears, followed by long and grateful prayer, contributed to the restoration of her mind and nerves. Imperfect as this young woman's notions of abstract right and wrong still were, she was yet sensible to the claims of a father (no matter how criminal) upon his child : for feelings with her were so good and true, that they supplied in a great measure the place of principles. She knew that she could not have lived under the same roof with her dreadful parent ; but she still felt an uneasy remorse at thinking he had been driven from that roof in destitution and want. She hastened to dress herself and seek an audience with

her protector ; and the latter found with admiration and pleasure that he had anticipated her own instantaneous and involuntary design in the settlement made upon Darvil. He then communicated to Alice the compact he had already formed with her father, and she wept and kissed his hand when she heard, and secretly resolved that she would work hard to be enabled to increase the sum allowed. Oh, if her labours could serve to retrieve a parent from the necessity of darker resources for support ! Alas ! when crime has become a custom, it is like gaming or drinking—the excitement is wanting ; and had Luke Darvil been suddenly made inheritor of the wealth of a Rothschild, he would either still have been a villain in one way or the other ; or *ennui* would have awokened conscience, and he would have died of the change of habit.

Our banker always seemed more struck by Alice's moral feelings than even by her physical beauty. Her love for her child, for instance, impressed him powerfully, and he always gazed upon her with softer eyes when he saw her caressing or nursing the little fatherless creature, whose health was now delicate and precarious. It is difficult to say whether he was absolutely in love with Alice ; the phrase is too strong, perhaps, to be applied to a man past fifty, who had gone through emotions and trials enough to wear away freshness from his heart. His feelings altogether for Alice, the designs he entertained towards her, were of a very complicated nature ; and it will be long, perhaps, before the reader can thoroughly comprehend

them. He conducted Alice home that day ; but he said little by the way, perhaps because his female relation, for appearance's sake, accompanied them also. He, however, briefly cautioned Alice on no account to communicate to any one that it was her father who had been her visitor ; and she still shuddered too much at the reminiscence to appear likely to converse on it. The banker also judged it advisable to be so far confidential with Alice's servant as to take her aside, and tell her that the inauspicious stranger of the previous evening had been a very distant relation of Mrs Butler, who, from a habit of drunkenness, had fallen into evil and disorderly courses. The banker added, with a sanctified air, that he trusted, by a little serious conversation, he had led the poor man to better notions, and that he had gone home with an altered mind to his family. "But, my good Hannah," he concluded, "you know you are a superior person, and above the vulgar sin of indiscriminate gossip ; therefore, mention what has occurred to no one ; it can do no good to Mrs Butler—it may hurt the man himself, who is well to do—better off than he seems ; and who, I hope, with grace, may be a sincere penitent ; and it will also—but that is nothing—very seriously displease me. By the by, Hannah, I shall be able to get your grandson into the Free School."

The banker was shrewd enough to perceive that he had carried his point ; and he was walking home, satisfied, on the whole, with the way matters had been arranged, when he was met by a brother magistrate.

“ Ha ! ” said the latter, “ and how are you, my good sir ? Do you know that we have had the Bow Street officers here, in search of a notorious villain who has broken from prison ? He is one of the most determined and dexterous burglars in all England, and the runners have hunted him into our town. His very robberies have tracked him by the way. He robbed a gentleman the day before yesterday of his watch, and left him for dead on the road—this was not thirty miles hence.”

“ Bless me ! ” said the banker, with emotion ; “ and what is the wretch’s name ? ”

“ Why, he has as many aliases as a Spanish grandee ; but I believe the last name he has assumed is Peter Watts.”

“ Oh ! ” said our friend, relieved—“ well, have the runners found him ? ”

“ No, but they are on his scent. A fellow answering to his description was seen by the man at the toll-bar, at daybreak this morning, on the way to F—— : the officers are after him.”

“ I hope he may meet with his deserts—and crime is never unpunished, even in this world. My best compliments to your lady :—and how is little Jack ?—Well ! glad to hear it—fine boy, little Jack !—good-day.”

“ Good-day, my dear sir. Worthy man, that ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

But who is this? thought he; a demon vile,
With wicked meaning and a vulgar style;
Hammond they call him—they can give the name
Of man to devils;—Why am I so tame?
Why crush I not the viper? Fear replied,
Watch him awhile, and let his strength be tried.—CRABEE.

THE next morning, after breakfast, the banker took his horse—a crop-eared, fast-trotting hackney—and, merely leaving word that he was going upon business into the country, and should not return to dinner, turned his back on the spires of C—.

He rode slowly, for the day was hot. The face of the country, which was fair and smiling, might have tempted others to linger by the way: but our hard and practical man of the world was more influenced by the weather than the loveliness of the scenery. He did not look upon Nature with the eye of imagination; perhaps a railroad, had it then and there existed, would have pleased him better than the hanging woods, the shadowy valleys, and the changeful river that from time to time beautified the landscape on either side the road. But, after all, there is a vast deal of hypocrisy in the affected admiration for Nature;—and I don't think one person in a hundred cares for what lies by the side of

a road, so long as the road itself is good, hills levelled, and turnpikes cheap.

It was mid-noon, and many miles had been passed, when the banker turned down a green lane and quickened his pace. At the end of about three-quarters of an hour he arrived at a little solitary inn called "The Angler"—put up his horse, ordered his dinner at six o'clock—begged to borrow a basket to hold his fish—and it was then apparent that a longish cane he had carried with him was capable of being extended into a fishing-rod. He fitted in the various joints with care, as if to be sure no accident had happened to the implement by the journey—pried anxiously into the contents of a black case of lines and flies—slung the basket behind his back, and while his horse was putting down his nose and whisking about his tail, in the course of those nameless coquetties that horses carry on with ostlers, our worthy brother of the rod strode rapidly through some green fields, gained the river-side, and began fishing with much semblance of earnest interest in the sport. He had caught one trout, seemingly by accident—for the astonished fish was hooked up on the outside of its jaw, probably while in the act, not of biting, but of gazing at, the bait—when he grew discontented with the spot he had selected; and, after looking round as if to convince himself that he was not liable to be disturbed or observed (a thought hateful to the fishing fraternity), he stole quickly along the margin, and, finally quitting the river-side altogether, struck into a path that, after a sharp walk of nearly

an hour, brought him to the door of a cottage. He knocked twice, and then entered of his own accord—nor was it till the summer sun was near its decline that the banker regained his inn. His simple dinner, which they had delayed in wonder at the protracted absence of the angler, and in expectation of the fishes he was to bring back to be fried, was soon despatched ; his horse was ordered to the door, and the red clouds in the west already betokened the lapse of another day, as he spurred from the spot on the fast-trotting hackney, fourteen miles an hour.

“That ere gemman has a nice bit of blood,” said the ostler, scratching his ear.

“Oiy,—who be he ?” said a hanger-on of the stables.

“I dooant know. He has been here twice afoar, and he never cauches anything to sinnify—he be mighty fond of fishing—surely.”

Meanwhile, away sped the banker—milestone on milestone glided by—and still, scarce turning a hair, trotted gallantly out the good hackney. But the evening grew darker, and it began to rain ; a drizzling, persevering rain, that wets a man through ere he is aware of it. After his fiftieth year, a gentleman who has a tender regard for himself does not like to get wet ; and the rain inspired the banker, who was subject to rheumatism, with the resolution to make a short cut along the fields. There were one or two low hedges by this short way, but the banker had been there in the spring, and knew every inch of the ground. The hackney leaped easily—and the rider had a tolerably

practised seat—and two miles saved might just prevent the menaced rheumatism : accordingly, our friend opened a white gate, and scoured along the fields without any misgiving as to the prudence of his choice. He arrived at his first leap—there was the hedge, its summit just discernible in the dim light. On the other side, to the right, was a haystack, and close by this haystack seemed the most eligible place for clearing the obstacle. Now since the banker had visited this place, a deep ditch, that served as a drain, had been dug at the opposite base of the hedge, of which neither horse nor man was aware, so that the leap was far more perilous than was anticipated. Unconscious of this additional obstacle, the rider set off in a canter. The banker was high in air, his loins bent back, his rein slackened, his right hand raised knowingly—when the horse took fright at an object crouched by the haystack—swerved, plunged midway into the ditch, and pitched its rider two or three yards over its head. The banker recovered himself sooner than might have been expected ; and, finding himself, though bruised and shaken, still whole and sound, hastened to his horse. But the poor animal had not fared so well as its master, and its off-shoulder was either put out or dreadfully sprained. It had scrambled its way out of the ditch, and there it stood disconsolate by the hedge as lame as one of the trees that, at irregular intervals, broke the symmetry of the barrier. On ascertaining the extent of his misfortune, the banker became seriously uneasy ; the rain increased—he was several miles

yet from home—he was in the midst of houseless fields, with another leap before him—the leap he had just passed behind—and no other egress that he knew of into the main road. While these thoughts passed through his brain, he became suddenly aware that he was not alone. The dark object that had frightened his horse rose slowly from the snug corner it had occupied by the haystack, and a gruff voice that made the banker thrill to the marrow of his bones, cried, “ Holla ! who the devil are you ? ”

Lame as his horse was, the banker instantly put his foot into the stirrup : but before he could mount, a heavy gripe was laid on his shoulder—and turning round with as much fierceness as he could assume, he saw—what the tone of the voice had already led him to forebode—the ill-omened and cut-throat features of Luke Darvil.

“ Ha ! ha ! my old annuitant, my clever feelosofer —jolly old boy—how are you ? —give us a fist. Who would have thought to meet you on a rainy night, by a lone haystack, with a deep ditch on one side, and no chimney-pot within sight ? Why, old fellow, I, Luke Darvil—I, the vagabond—I, whom you would have sent to the treadmill for being poor, and calling on my own daughter—I am as rich as you are here—and as great, and as strong, and as powerful ! ”

And while he spoke, Darvil, who was really an undersized man, seemed to swell and dilate, till he appeared half a head taller than the shrinking banker, who was five feet eleven inches without his shoes.

"E—hem!" said the rich man, clearing his throat, which seemed to him uncommonly husky; "I do not know whether I insulted your poverty, my dear Mr Darvil—I hope not; but this is hardly a time for talking—pray let me mount, and——"

"Not a time for talking!" interrupted Darvil, angrily; "it's just the time to my mind; let me consider,—ay, I told you, that whenever we met by the roadside, it would be my turn to have the best of the argufying."

"I dare say—I dare say, my good fellow."

"Fellow not me!—I won't be fellowed now. I say I have the best of it here—man to man—I am your match."

"But why quarrel with me?" said the banker, coaxingly; "I never meant you harm, and I am sure you cannot mean me harm."

"No!—and why?" asked Darvil, coolly;—"why do you think I can mean you no harm?"

"Because your annuity depends on me."

"Shrewdly put—we'll argufy that point. My life is a bad one, not worth more than a year's purchase: now, suppose you have more than forty pounds about you—it may be better worth my while to draw my knife across your gullet than to wait for the quarter-day's ten pounds a time. You see it's all a matter of calculation, my *dear* Mr What's-your-name!"

"But," replied the banker, and his teeth began to chatter, "I have not forty pounds about me."

"How do I know that?—you say so. Well, in the

town yonder your word goes for more than mine ; I never gainsaid you when you put that to me, did I ? But here, by the haystack, my word is better than yours ; and if I say you must and shall have forty pounds about you, let's see whether you dare contradict me !”

“Look you, Darvil,” said the banker, summoning up all his energy and intellect, for his moral power began now to back his physical cowardice, and he spoke calmly, and even bravely, though his heart throbbed aloud against his breast, and you might have knocked him down with a feather—“the London runners are even now hot after you.”

“Ha !—you lie !”

“Upon my honour I speak the truth ; I heard the news last evening. They tracked you to C—— ; they tracked you out of the town ; a word from me would have given you into their hands. I said nothing—you are safe—you may yet escape. I will even help you to fly the country, and live out your natural date of years, secure and in peace.”

“You did not say that the other day in the snug drawing-room ; you see I have the best of it now—own that.”

“I do,” said the banker.

Darvil chuckled, and rubbed his hands.

The man of wealth once more felt his importance, and went on. “This is one side of the question. On the other, suppose you rob and murder me, do you think my death will lessen the heat of the pursuit

against you ? The whole country will be in arms, and before forty-eight hours are over, you will be hunted down like a mad dog."

Darvil was silent, as if in thought ; and, after a pause, replied—" Well, you are a 'cute one, after all. What have you got about you ? you know you drove a hard bargain the other day—now it's my market—fustian has riz—kersey has fell."

" All I have about me shall be yours," said the banker, eagerly.

" Give it me, then."

" There !" said the banker, placing his purse and pocket-book into Darvil's hands.

" And the watch ?"

" The watch ?—well, there !"

" What's that ?"

The banker's senses were sharpened by fear, but they were not so sharp as those of Darvil ; he heard nothing but the rain pattering on the leaves, and the rush of water in the ditch at hand. Darvil stooped and listened —till, raising himself again, with a deep-drawn breath, he said, " I think there are rats in the haystack ; they will be running over me in my sleep ; but they are playful creturs, and I like 'em. And now, my dear sir, I am afraid I must put an end to you ! "

" Good Heavens ! what do you mean ? How ?"

" Man, there is another world !" quoth the ruffian, mimicking the banker's solemn tone in their former interview. " So much the better for you ! In that world they don't tell tales."

"I swear I will never betray you."

"You do?—swear it, then."

"By all my hopes of earth and heaven!"

"What a d—d coward you be!" said Darvil, laughing scornfully. "Go—you are safe. I am in good humour with myself again. I crow over you, for no man can make *me* tremble. And villain as you think me, while you fear me you cannot despise—you respect me. Go, I say—go."

The banker was about to obey, when suddenly, from the haystack, a broad, red light streamed upon the pair, and the next moment Darvil was seized from behind, and struggling in the grip of a man nearly as powerful as himself. The light, which came from a dark lantern, placed on the ground, revealed the forms of a peasant in a smockfrock, and two stout-built, stalwart men, armed with pistols—besides the one engaged with Darvil.

The whole of this scene was brought as by the trick of the stage—as by a flash of lightning—as by the change of a showman's phantasmagoria—before the astonished eyes of the banker. He stood arrested and spell-bound, his hand on his bridle, his foot on his stirrup. A moment more, and Darvil had dashed his antagonist on the ground; he stood at a little distance, his face reddened by the glare of the lantern, and fronting his assailants—that fiercest of all beasts, a desperate man at bay! He had already succeeded in drawing forth his pistols, and he held one in each hand—his eyes flashing from beneath his bent brows, and

turning quickly from foe to foe ! At last those terrible eyes rested on the late reluctant companion of his solitude.

“So *you*, then, betrayed me,” he said, very slowly, and directed his pistol to the head of the dismounted horseman.

“No, no !” cried one of the officers, for such were Darvil’s assailants ; “fire away in this direction, my hearty—we’re paid for it. The gentleman knew nothing at all about it.”

“Nothing, by G—!” cried the banker, startled out of his sanctity.

“Then I shall keep my shot,” said Darvil ; “and mind, the first who approaches me is a dead man.”

It so happened that the robber and the officers were beyond the distance which allows sure mark for a pistol-shot, and each party felt the necessity of caution.

“Your time is up, my swell cove !” cried the head of the detachment ; “you have had your swing, and a long one it seems to have been—you must now give in. Throw down your barkers, or we must make mutton of you, and rob the gallows.”

Darvil did not reply, and the officers, accustomed to hold life cheap, moved on towards him—their pistols cocked and levelled.

Darvil fired—one of the men staggered and fell. With a kind of instinct, Darvil had singled out the one with whom he had before wrestled for life. The ruffian waited not for the others—he turned and fled along the fields.

“Zounds, he is off !” cried the other two, and they

rushed after him in pursuit. A pause—a shot—another—an oath—a groan—and all was still.

“It’s all up with him now !” said one of the runners, in the distance ; “he dies game.”

At these words, the peasant, who had before skulked behind the haystack, seized the lantern from the ground, and ran to the spot. The banker involuntarily followed.

There lay Luke Darvil on the grass—still living, but a horrible and ghastly spectacle. One ball had pierced his breast, another had shot away his jaw. His eyes rolled fearfully, and he tore up the grass with his hands.

The officers looked coldly on. “He was a clever fellow !” said one.

“And has given us much trouble,” said the other ; “let us see to Will.”

“But he’s not dead yet,” said the banker, shuddering.

“Sir, he cannot live a minute.”

Darvil raised himself bolt upright—shook his clenched fist at his conquerors, and a fearful gurgling howl, which the nature of his wound did not allow him to syllable into a curse, came from his breast—with that he fell flat on his back—a corpse.

“I am afraid, sir,” said the elder officer turning away, “you had a narrow escape—but how came you here ?”

“Rather, how came *you* here ?”

“Honest Hodge there, with the lantern, had marked the fellow skulk behind the haystack, when he him-

self was going out to snare rabbits. He had seen our advertisement of Watts's person, and knew that we were then at a public-house some miles off. He came to us—conducted us to the spot—we heard voices—showed up the glim—and saw our man. Hodge, you are a good subject, and love justice."

"Yees, but I shall have the rewourd," said Hodge, showing his teeth.

"Talk o' that by-and-by," said the officer. "Will, how are you, man?"

"Bad," groaned the poor runner, and a rush of blood from the lips followed the groan.

It was many days before the ex-member for C—— sufficiently recovered the tone of his mind to think further of Alice ; when he did, it was with great satisfaction that he reflected that Darvil was no more, and that the deceased ruffian was only known to the neighbourhood by the name of Peter Watts.

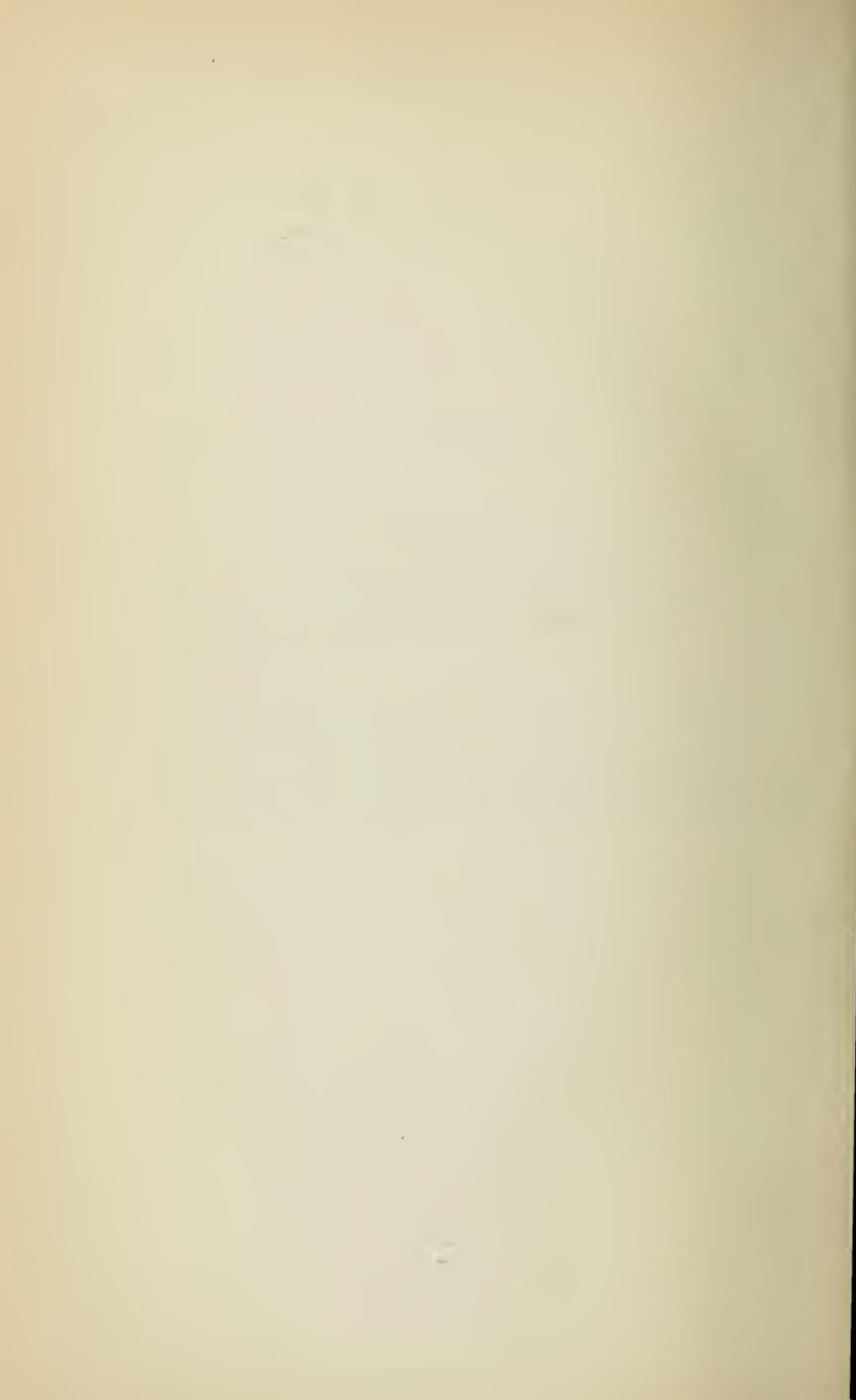
BOOK V.

‘Ο μουσοποιὸς ἐνθαδ’ ‘Ιππώναξ κεῖται.
Εἰ μὲν πονηρὸς, μὴ ποτέρχεν τῷ τύμβῳ·
Εἰ δ’ εσσὶ κρήγυός τε καὶ παρὰ χρηστῶν
Θαρσέων καθίζευ· κἄν θελης ἀπόβριξον.

THEOC. *Epig. in Hippom.*

PARODY.

My hero, turned author, lies mute in this section,
You may pass by the place if you’re bored by reflection :
But if honest enough to be fond of the Muse,
Stay, and read where you’re able, and sleep where you choose.



BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

My genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring.

Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Intent on high designs.—GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE no respect for the Englishman who re-enters London, after long residence abroad, without a pulse that beats quick, and a heart that heaves high. The public buildings are few, and, for the most part, mean ; the monuments of antiquity not comparable to those which the pettiest town in Italy can boast of ; the palaces are sad rubbish ; the houses of our peers and princes are shabby and shapeless heaps of brick. But what of all this ? the spirit of London is in her thoroughfares—her population ! What wealth—what cleanliness—what order—what animation ! How majestic, and yet how vivid, is the life that runs through her myriad veins ! How, as the lamps blaze upon you at night, and street after street glides by your wheels,

each so regular in its symmetry, so equal in its civilisation—how all speak of the CITY OF FREEMEN !

Yes, Maltravers felt his heart swell within him, as the post-horses whirled on his dingy carriage—over Westminster Bridge—along Whitehall—through Regent Street—towards one of the quiet and private-house-like hotels, that are scattered round the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square.

Ernest's arrival had been expected. He had written from Paris to Cleveland to announce it ; and Cleveland had, in reply, informed him that he had engaged apartments for him at Mivart's. The smiling waiters ushered him into a spacious and well-aired room—the arm-chair was already wheeled by the fire—a score or so of letters strewed the table, together with two of the evening papers. And how eloquently of busy England do those evening papers speak ! A stranger might have felt that he wanted no friend to welcome him—the whole room smiled on him a welcome.

Maltravers ordered his dinner and opened his letters : they were of no importance ; one from his steward, one from his banker, another about the county races, a fourth from a man he had never heard of, requesting the vote and powerful interest of Mr Maltravers for the county of B——, should the rumour of a dissolution be verified ; the unknown candidate referred Mr Maltravers to his “well-known public character.” From these epistles Ernest turned impatiently, and perceived a little three-cornered note which had hitherto escaped his attention. It was from Cleveland, intimating that

he was in town ; that his health still precluded his going out, but that he trusted to see his dear Ernest as soon as he arrived.

Maltravers was delighted at the prospect of passing his evening so agreeably ; he soon despatched his dinner and his newspapers, and walked in the brilliant lamplight of a clear frosty evening of early December in London, to his friend's house in Curzon Street : a small house, bachelor - like and unpretending ; for Cleveland spent his moderate though easy fortune almost entirely at his country villa. The familiar face of the old valet greeted Ernest at the door, and he only paused to hear that his guardian was nearly recovered to his usual health, ere he was in the cheerful drawing-room, and—since Englishmen do not embrace —returning the cordial gripe of the kindly Cleveland.

“ Well, my dear Ernest,” said Cleveland, after they had gone through the preliminary round of questions and answers, “ here you are at last : heaven be praised ; and how well you are looking—how much you are improved ! It is an excellent period of the year for your *début* in London. I shall have time to make you intimate with people before the whirl of ‘ the season ’ commences.”

“ Why, I thought of going to Burleigh, my country-place. I have not seen it since I was a child.”

“ No, no ! you have had solitude enough at Como, if I may trust to your letter ; you must now mix with the great London world ; and you will enjoy Burleigh the more in the summer.”

"I fancy this great London world will give me very little pleasure ; it may be pleasant enough to young men just let loose from college, but your crowded ball rooms and monotonous clubs will be wearisome to one who has grown fastidious before his time. *J'ai vécu beaucoup dans peu d'années.* I have drawn in youth too much upon the capital of existence, to be highly delighted with the ostentatious parsimony with which our great men economise pleasure."

"Don't judge before you have gone through the trial," said Cleveland : "there is something in the opulent splendour, the thoroughly sustained magnificence, with which the leaders of English fashion conduct even the most insipid amusements, that is above contempt. Besides, you need not necessarily live with the butterflies. There are plenty of bees that will be very happy to make your acquaintance. Add to this, my dear Ernest, the pleasure of being made of—of being of importance in your own country. For you are young, well-born, and sufficiently handsome to be an object of interest to mothers and to daughters ; while your name, and property, and interest, will make you courted by men who want to borrow your money and obtain your influence in your county. No, Maltravers, stay in London — amuse yourself your first year, and decide on your occupation and career the next ; but reconnoitre before you give battle."

Maltravers was not ill pleased to follow his friend's advice, since by so doing he obtained his friend's guidance and society. Moreover, he deemed it wise and

rational to see, face to face, the eminent men in England, with whom, if he fulfilled his promise to De Montaigne, he was to run the race of honourable rivalry. Accordingly, he consented to Cleveland's propositions.

“And have you,” said he, hesitating, as he loitered by the door after the stroke of twelve had warned him to take his leave—“have you never heard anything of my—my—the unfortunate Alice Darvil ?”

“Who ?—Oh, that poor young woman ; I remember !—not a syllable.”

Maltravers sighed deeply, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

Je trouve que c'est une folie de vouloir étudier le monde en simple spectateur. . . . Dans l'école du monde, comme dans celle de l'amour, il faut commencer par pratiquer ce qu'on veut apprendre.*—ROUSSEAU.

ERNEST MALTRavers was now fairly launched upon the wide ocean of London. Amongst his other property was a house in Seomore Place—that quiet, yet central street, which enjoys the air without the dust of the Park. It had been hitherto let, and the tenant now quitting very opportunely, Maltravers was delighted to secure so pleasant a residence ; for he was still romantic enough to desire to look out upon trees and verdure rather than brick houses. He indulged only in two other luxuries : his love of music tempted him to an opera-box, and he had that English feeling which prides itself in the possession of beautiful horses—a feeling that enticed him into an extravagance on this head that baffled the competition and excited the envy of much richer men. But four thousand a-year goes a great way with a single man who does not gamble, and is too philosophical to make superfluities wants.

* I find that it is a folly to wish to study the world like a simple spectator. . . . In the school of the world, as in that of love, it is necessary to begin by practising what we wish to learn.

The world doubled his income, magnified his old country-seat into a superb chateau, and discovered that his elder brother, who was only three or four years older than himself, had no children. The world was very courteous to Ernest Maltravers.

It was, as Cleveland said, just at that time of year when people are at leisure to make new acquaintances. A few only of the most difficult houses in town were open ; and their doors were cheerfully expanded to the accomplished ward of the popular Cleveland. Authors, and statesmen, and orators, and philosophers —to all he was presented ;—all seemed pleased with him, and Ernest became the fashion before he was conscious of the distinction. But he had rightly foreboded. He had commenced life too soon ; he was disappointed ; he found some persons he could admire, some whom he could like, but none with whom he could grow intimate, or for whom he could feel an interest. Neither his heart nor his imagination was touched ; all appeared to him like artificial machines : he was discontented with things like life, but in which something or other was wanting. He more than ever recalled the brilliant graces of Valerie de Ventadour, which had thrown a charm over the most frivolous circles ; he even missed the perverse and fantastic vanity of Castruccio. The mediocre poet seemed to him at least less mediocre than the worldlings about him. Nay, even the selfish good spirits and dry shrewdness of Lumley Ferrers would have been an acceptable change to the dull polish and unrelieved

egotism of jealous wits and party politicians. “ If these are the flowers of the parterre, what must be the weeds ? ” said Maltravers to himself, returning from a party at which he had met half a score of the most orthodox lions.

He began to feel the aching pain of satiety.

But the winter glided away—the season commenced, and Maltravers was whirled on with the rest into the bubbling vortex.

CHAPTER III.

And crowds commencing mere vexation,
Retirement sent its invitation.—SHENSTONE.

THE tench, no doubt, considers the pond in which he lives as the Great World. There is no place, however stagnant, which is not the great world to the creatures that move about in it. People who have lived all their lives in a village still talk of the world as if they had ever seen it ! An old woman in a hovel does not put her nose out of her door on a Sunday without thinking she is going amongst the pomps and vanities of the great world. *Ergo*, the great world is to all of us the little circle in which we live. But as fine people set the fashion, so the circle of fine people is called the Great World, *par excellence*. Now this great world is not a bad thing when we thoroughly understand it ; and the London great world is at least as good as any other. But, then, we scarcely *do* understand that or anything else in our *beaux jours*,—which, if they are sometimes the most exquisite, are also often the most melancholy and the most wasted portion of our life. Maltravers had not yet found out either *the set* that pleased him or the species of amusement that really

amused. Therefore he drifted on and about the vast whirlpool, making plenty of friends—going to balls and dinners—and bored with both, as men are who have no object in society. Now the way society is enjoyed is to have a pursuit, a *métier* of some kind, and then to go into the world, either to make the individual object a social pleasure, or to obtain a reprieve from some toilsome avocation. Thus if you are a politician—politics at once make an object in your closet, and a social tie between others and yourself when you are in the world. The same may be said of literature, though in a less degree ; and though, as fewer persons care about literature than politics, your companions must be more select. If you are very young, you are fond of dancing ; if you are very profligate, perhaps you are fond of flirtations with your friend's wife. These last are objects in their way ; but they don't last long, and, even with the most frivolous, are not occupations that satisfy the whole mind and heart, in which there is generally an aspiration after something useful. It is not vanity alone that makes a man of the *mode* invent a new bit, or give his name to a new kind of carriage ; it is the influence of that mystic yearning after utility, which is one of the master-ties between the individual and the species.

Maltravers was not happy—that is a lot common enough ; but he was not amused—and that is a sentence more insupportable. He lost a great part of his sympathy with Cleveland, for, when a man is not amused, he feels an involuntary contempt for those

who are. He fancies they are pleased with trifles which his superior wisdom is compelled to disdain. Cleveland was of that age when we generally grow social—for by being rubbed long and often against the great loadstone of society, we obtain, in a thousand little minute points, an attraction in common with our fellows. Their petty sorrows and small joys—their objects of interest or employment, at some time or other have been ours. We gather up a vast collection of moral and mental farthings of exchange ; and we scarcely find any intellect too poor, but what we can deal with it in some way. But in youth we are egotists and sentimentalists, and Maltravers belonged to the fraternity who employ

“The heart in passion and the head in rhymes.”

At length—just when London begins to grow most pleasant—when flirtations become tender, and water-parties numerous—when birds sing in the groves of Richmond, and whitebait refresh the statesman by the shores of Greenwich—Maltravers abruptly fled from the gay metropolis, and arrived, one lovely evening in July, at his own ivy-grown porch of Burleigh.

What a soft, fresh, delicious evening it was ! He had quitted his carriage at the lodge, and followed it across the small but picturesque park alone and on foot. He had not seen the place since childhood—he had quite forgotten its aspect. He now wondered how he could have lived anywhere else. The trees did not stand in stately avenues, nor did the antlers of the

deer wave above the sombre fern ; it was not the domain of a grand seigneur, but of an old, long-descended English squire. Antiquity spoke in the moss-grown palings, in the shadowy groves, in the sharp gable-ends and heavy mullions of the house, as it now came in view, at the base of a hill covered with wood—and partially veiled by the shrubs of the neglected pleasure-ground, separated from the park by the invisible ha-ha. There, gleamed in the twilight the watery face of the oblong fish-pool, with its old-fashioned willows at each corner—there, grey and quaint, was the monastic dial—and there was the long terrace-walk, with discoloured and broken vases, now filled with the orange or the aloe, which, in honour of his master's arrival, the gardener had extracted from the dilapidated greenhouse. The very evidence of neglect around, the very weeds and grass on the half-obliterated road, touched Maltravers with a sort of pitying and remorseful affection for his calm and sequestered residence. And it was not with his usual proud step and erect crest that he passed from the porch to the solitary library, through a line of his servants :—the two or three old retainers belonging to the place were utterly unfamiliar to him, and they had no smile for their stranger lord.

CHAPTER IV.

Lucian.—He that is born to be a man, neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, and better than a man.

Peregrine.—But, good Lucian, for the very reason that he may not become less than a man, he should be always striving to be more.—WIELAND'S *Peregrinus Proteus*.

IT was two years from the date of the last chapter before Maltravers again appeared in general society. These two years had sufficed to produce a revolution in his fate. Ernest Maltravers had lost the happy rights of the private individual ; he had given himself to the Public ; he had surrendered his name to men's tongues, and was a thing that all had a right to praise, to blame, to scrutinise, to spy. Ernest Maltravers had become an author.

Let no man tempt Gods and Columns, without weighing well the consequences of his experiment. He who publishes a book, attended with a moderate success, passes a mighty barrier. He will often look back with a sigh of regret at the land he has left for ever. The beautiful and decent obscurity of hearth and home is gone. He can no longer feel the just indignation of manly pride when he finds himself ridiculed or reviled. He has parted with the shadow of his life. His motives may be misrepresented, his char-

acter belied ; his manners, his person, his dress, the “very trick of his walk,” are all fair food for the cavil and the caricature. He can never go back, he cannot even pause : he has chosen his path, and all the natural feelings that make the nerve and muscle of the active being, urge him to proceed. To stop short is to fail. He has told the world that he will make a name ; and he must be set down as a pretender, or toil on till the boast be fulfilled. Yet Maltravers thought nothing of all this when, intoxicated with his own dreams and aspirations, he desired to make a world his confidant : when from the living Nature, and the lore of books, and the mingled result of inward study and external observation, he sought to draw forth something that might interweave his name with the pleasurable associations of his kind. His easy fortune and lonely state gave him up to his own thoughts and contemplations ; they suffused his mind, till it ran over upon the page which makes the channel that connects the solitary Fountain with the vast Ocean of Human Knowledge. The temperament of Maltravers was, as we have seen, neither irritable nor fearful. He formed himself, as a sculptor forms with a model before his eyes, and an ideal in his heart. He endeavoured, with labour and patience, to approach nearer and nearer with every effort to the standard of such excellence as he thought might ultimately be attained by a reasonable ambition ; and when, at last, his judgment was satisfied, he surrendered the product with a tranquil confidence to a more impartial tribunal.

His first work was successful ; perhaps from this reason, that it bore the stamp of the Honest and the Real. He did not sit down to report of what he had never seen, to dilate on what he had never felt. A quiet and thoughtful observer of life, his descriptions were the more vivid because his own first impressions were not yet worn away. His experience had sunk deep ; not on the arid surface of matured age, but in the fresh soil of youthful emotions. Another reason, perhaps, that obtained success for his essay was, that he had more varied and more elaborate knowledge than young authors think it necessary to possess. He did not, like Cesarini, attempt to make a show of words upon a slender capital of ideas. Whether his style was eloquent or homely, it was still in him a faithful transcript of considered and digested thought. A third reason—and I dwell on these points not more to elucidate the career of Maltravers, than as hints which may be useful to others—a third reason why Maltravers obtained a prompt and favourable reception from the public was, that he had not hackneyed his peculiarities of diction and thought in that worst of all schools for the literary novice—the columns of a magazine. Periodicals form an excellent mode of communication between the public and an author *already* established, who has lost the charm of novelty, but gained the weight of acknowledged reputation ; and who, either upon politics or criticism, seeks for frequent and continuous occasions to enforce his peculiar theses and doctrines. But, upon the young writer,

this mode of communication, if too long continued, operates most injuriously both as to his future prospects and his own present taste and style. With respect to the first, it familiarises the public to his mannerism (and all writers worth reading have mannerism) in a form to which the said public are not inclined to attach much weight. He forestalls in a few months what ought to be the effect of years ; namely, the wearying a world soon nauseated with the *toujours perdrix*. With respect to the last, it induces a man to write for momentary effects ; to study a false smartness of style and reasoning ; to bound his ambition of durability to the last day of the month ; to expect immediate returns for labour ; to recoil at the “hope deferred” of serious works on which judgment is slowly formed. The man of talent who begins young at periodicals, and goes on long, has generally something crude and stunted about both his compositions and his celebrity. He grows the oracle of small coteries ; and we can rarely get out of the impression that he is cockneyfied and conventional. Periodicals sadly mortgaged the claims that Hazlitt, and many others of his contemporaries, had upon a vast rever-sionary estate of Fame. But I here speak too politically ; to some, the *res angustae domi* leave no option. And, as Aristotle and the Greek proverb have it, we cannot carve out all things with the knife of the Delphic cutler.

The second work that Maltravers put forth, at an

interval of eighteen months from the first, was one of a graver and higher nature : it served to confirm his reputation ; and that is success enough for a second work, which is usually an author's "*pons asinorum*." He who, after a triumphant first book, does not dis-satisfy the public with a second, has a fair chance of gaining a fixed station in literature. But now com-menced the pains and perils of the after-birth. By a maiden effort an author rarely makes enemies. His fellow-writers are not yet prepared to consider him as a rival ; if he be tolerably rich, they unconsciously trust that he will not become a regular, or, as they term it, "a professional" author : he did something just to be talked of ; he may write no more, or his second book may fail. But when that second book comes out, and does not fail, they begin to look about them ; envy wakens, malice begins. And all the old school—gentlemen who have retired on their pensions of renown—regard him as an intruder : then the sneer, then the frown, the caustic irony, the biting review, the depreciating praise. The novice begins to think that he is further from the goal than before he set out upon the race.

Maltravers had, upon the whole, a tolerably happy temperament ; but he was a very proud man, and he had the nice soul of a courageous, honourable, punctilious gentleman. He thought it singular that society should call upon him, as a gentleman, to shoot his best friend, if that friend affronted him with a rude

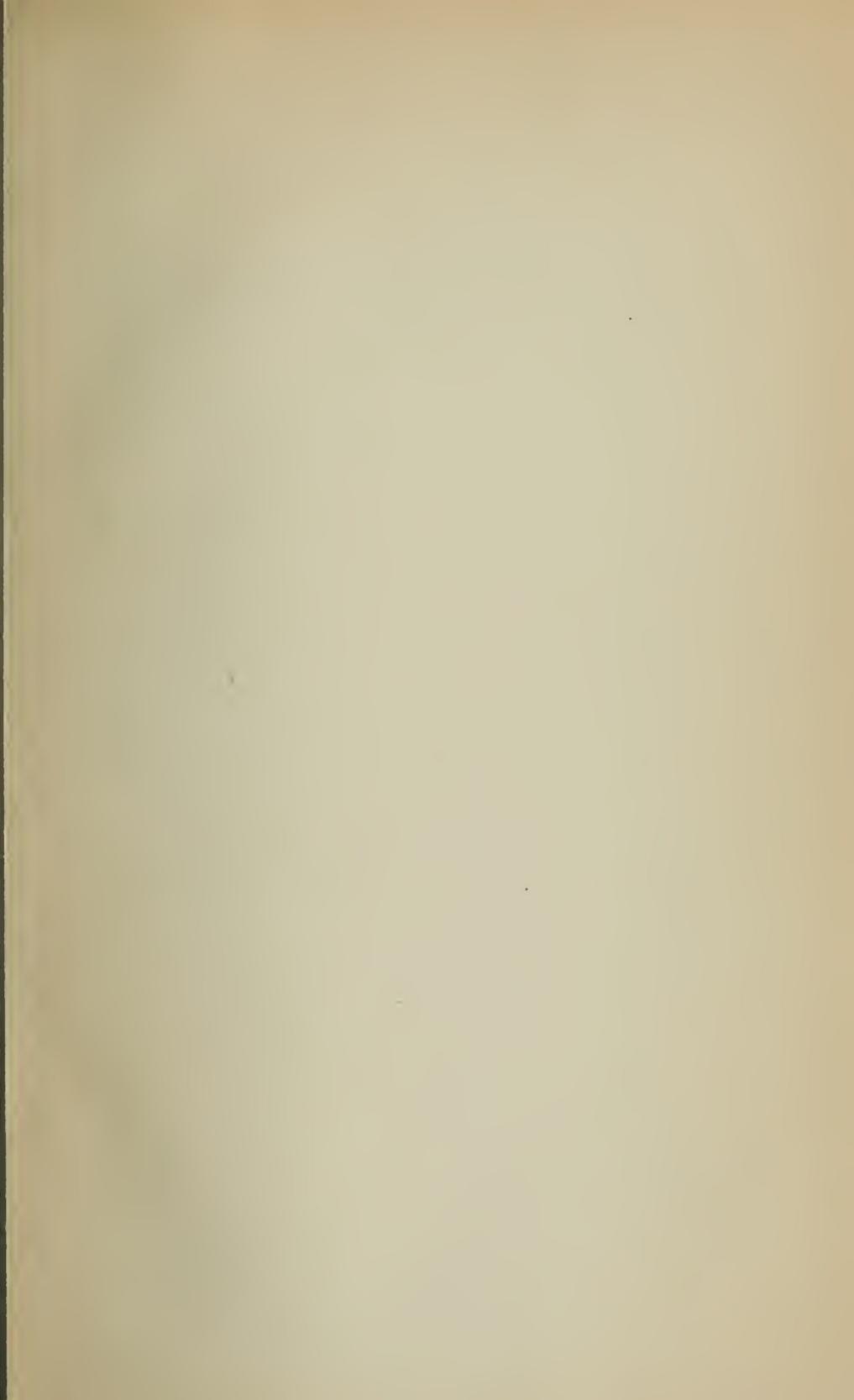
word ; and yet that, as an author, every fool and liar might, with perfect impunity, cover reams of paper with the most virulent personal abuse of him.

It was one evening in the early summer that, revolving anxious and doubtful thoughts, Ernest sauntered gloomily along his terrace,

“ And watched with wistful eyes the setting sun,”

when he perceived a dusty travelling carriage whirled along the road by the ha-ha, and a hand waved in recognition from the open window. His guests had been so rare, and his friends were so few, that Maltravers could not conjecture who was his intended visitant. His brother, he knew, was in London. Cleveland, from whom he had that day heard, was at his villa. Ferrers was enjoying himself at Vienna. Who could it be ? We may say of solitude what we please ; but after two years of solitude, a visitor is a pleasurable excitement. Maltravers retraced his steps, entered his house, and was just in time to find himself almost in the arms of De Montaigne.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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